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# Settlement Succession in Eastern French Louisiana.

William Bernard Knipmeyer

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

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SETTLEMENT SUCCESSION IN EASTERN FRENCH LOUISIANA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by

William B. Knipmeyer  
B. S., Louisiana State University, 1947  
August, 1956

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## ABSTRACT

Culture is the means by which the accomplishments of a people are transmitted from generation to generation. In addition to non-material things such as language, religion, and customs, the conservative force of culture also affects the material products such as dwellings and other structures and thus manifests itself in a landscape which bears the mark of a particular people. Much has been done in the study of the non-material culture of the Louisiana French people, but little for the material aspects of that culture group. No effort has been made to collect and systematize those items of material culture which distinguish that part of Louisiana inhabited by the descendants of French colonists. Those items are the subject of this investigation.

Extensive field studies revealed a large number of landscape forms which are identifiable as products of the Louisiana French culture group. They include dwellings, outbuildings, boats, fences, and systems of field and lot enclosure, and settlement pattern. Detailed information on these and associated traits was obtained by field observation and interrogation of many informants in a number of selected representative settlements. Investigation was limited to the eastern division of French Louisiana, the region of bayou settlements, where the controlling factors and changes in the settlement succession have been uniform.

Each landscape form where possible was traced from its development through modifications to abandonment or incorporation into the present landscape. Some forms were found to be general, others to be associated with the different landscape types of the region: the trapper-fisher--swamper landscape, the farm or plantation landscapes. Each trait or



kind of landscape fits a broader picture of landscape evolution which was controlled by the factors of mechanization, invention, and cultural diffusion. Significant changes in landscape aspects occurred at four critical times: the change from aboriginal to European frontier, frontier to pioneer, pioneer to recent, and recent to modern. The sequence of change in all landscape forms comprises the settlement succession for the region. The present landscape pattern of the region is composed of elements of different kinds of landscapes in different stages of the succession.

## Chapter I

### The Regional and Physical Setting

#### Introduction

Louisiana is divisible into two major culture areas where the landscapes bear the impress of two different culture groups. These two divisions have been conveniently called "Anglo-American Louisiana" and "French Louisiana." These terms designate the cultural heritage of the people who are responsible for the differing landscape patterns. The French were the first of the two to arrive. They came by sea and settled the southern portion of the state, extending northward only along the major valleys. The many problems of communication and economic activities generally kept them out of the hill lands to the north. The Anglo-Americans arrived much later. They came overland from the Atlantic seaboard and down the Mississippi River and settled in the more familiar and yet unoccupied hill lands. Thus, a simple pattern of separation obtained: the Anglo-Americans occupied the uplands in the northern part of the state and the French occupied the lowlands in the south. This correlation has given rise to other terms which sometimes are used to designate culture areas: South Louisiana for French Louisiana, and North Louisiana, or sometimes the "hill lands," or "Hill Louisiana," for Anglo-American Louisiana. Whereas these terms generally apply, they do not hold without exceptions. For the area which owes its individuality to the French colonists and their descendants, "French Louisiana" is the shortest term which comes closest to conveying the intended meaning.

It is of interest to delimit these regions on a map, but even on large scale maps many problems confront a conscientious effort. Three

general approaches are possible, none of which is completely satisfactory, and the results will vary according to the method used. A single trait may be selected as having diagnostic value, and its distribution would in some measure indicate the limits of the region. Several examples of this approach are in print. They are based on religion,<sup>1</sup> surnames,<sup>2</sup> and folk architecture.<sup>3</sup> Maps showing the occurrence of these traits indicate agreement in the core areas but not on the margins. It is clear, even with the small number of cases, that a distinct line is not possible. The great number of traits, both material and non-material, that collectively characterize a region are individually almost independent variables. The second and more complete approach would require the superposition of the distribution limits of a large number of traits. This would be more in keeping with the actual situation, but a simple boundary would not result. No such attempt has ever been completed.<sup>4</sup> The third possibility is not systematic. Regions could be delimited on the basis of a personal familiarity, and results would vary according to individual interpretations.<sup>5</sup>

For the reasons that an exact boundary does not exist and is not of

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, T.L. and Homer Hitt, The People of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Meigs, Peveril, "An Ethno-Telephonic Survey of French Louisiana," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, XXXI (1941), 243-250.

<sup>3</sup>Kniffen, Fred B., "Louisiana House Types," Ann. Assoc. Amer. Geogrs., XVI (1936), 179-193.

<sup>4</sup>Kniffen, Fred B., et al., Cultural Survey of Louisiana (unpublished manuscript, Office of Naval Research Project N 7 ONR 35606, Baton Rouge, 1951). This report contains a series of fourteen distribution maps of a variety of landscape facts.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

primary concern, a generalized line based on a sound knowledge of the area is the most desirable and satisfactory solution. Such a line would enclose most of the area, and the transitional zone of the margin would be of interest only where individual traits were investigated for the extent to which they either extend beyond or fail to reach the average margin. Some traits may be commonly adopted in the adjacent region, and some may be so diminished as to occur only in the core areas. The region may be represented by small enclaves which are completely detached from the main area. Thus, a cultural region is known by its nuclear conditions, and any average boundary is adequate.

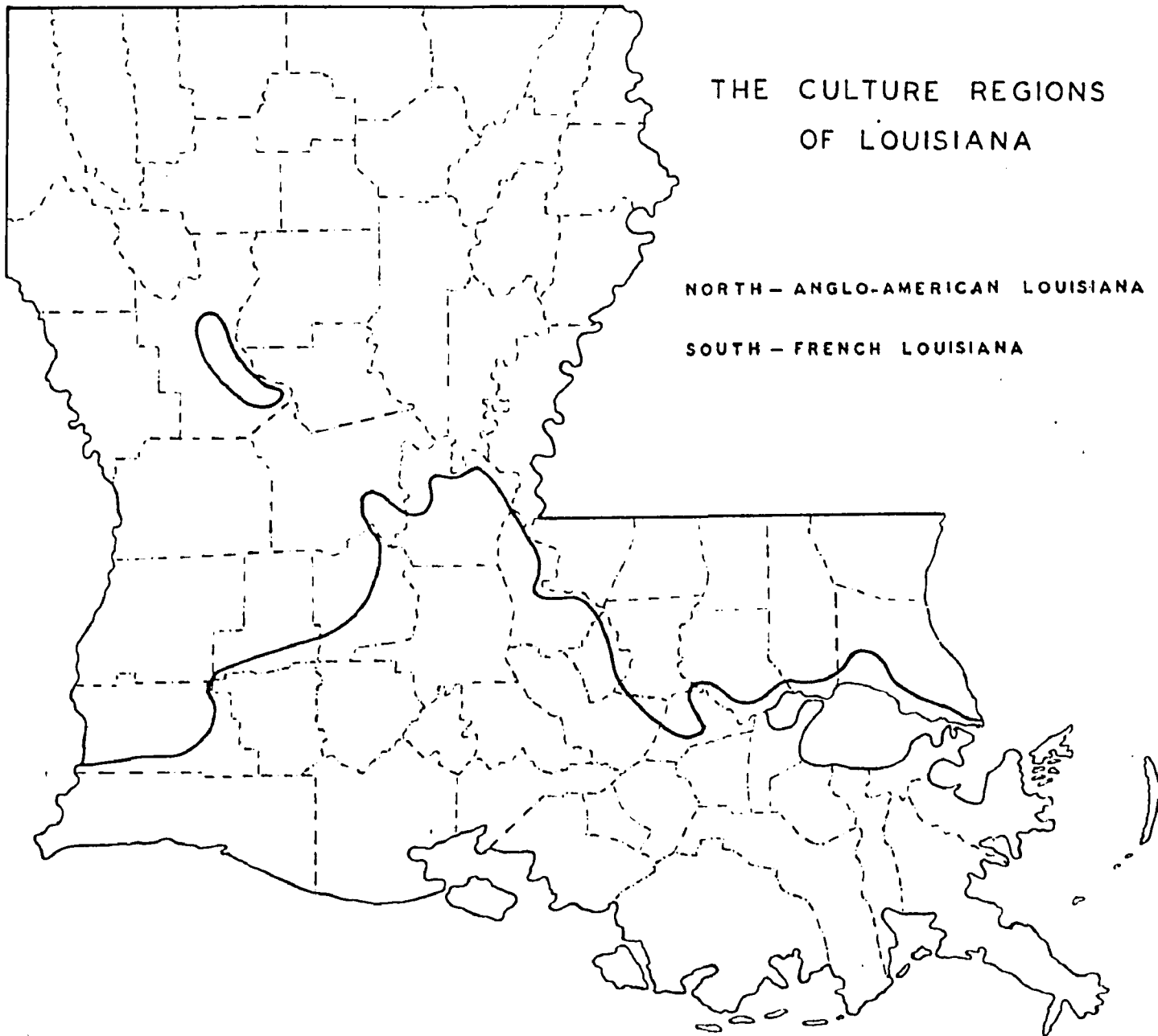
The area of French Louisiana is given in Plate 1. It is contained by a line which begins on the east near Slidell, and runs westward along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, across the Amite River north of Port Vincent, south of Gonzales and Dutchtown, along the left bank of the Mississippi River, north of Marksville, then in a southwesterly direction to the Calcasieu River near Lake Charles. The most important enclave is in Natchitoches Parish along the Cane River. The Cane River country is unmistakably a part of French Louisiana.

Within the area there exists a variety of landscape aspects, both rural and urban. Differences are great enough to require a subdivision into eastern and western portions. These differences are mainly the result of different cultural contacts, economic development, and natural environment. The feature which separates the two portions is the Atchafalaya Basin. The western division is the younger of the two, having been settled by a different group of French, the Acadians, who came via the east. There, closer contacts with the Anglo-American culture introduced certain modifications which further distinguish this division from

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OF LOUISIANA

NORTH - ANGLO-AMERICAN LOUISIANA

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the eastern half. Different economic developments, especially the retention of rice agriculture and the vacherie industry, and a different topography, prairie plain, induced other modifications. As the two divisions have undergone different developments, their settlement successions have not been the same, and they therefore require separate investigations.<sup>6</sup>

Eastern French Louisiana is designated in Plate 2. The only carefully determined boundary is the northern line from the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain to Baton Rouge, which separates French Louisiana from Anglo-American Louisiana. A line through the Atchafalaya Basin serves as a boundary on the west. The area so enclosed is a distinct nucleus and possesses a homogeneity such that most findings apply and few exceptions must be made. The region is the old nucleus of French colonial settlement in Louisiana and the largest area of typical "bayou country." It is the area of bayou settlements, and few other kinds exist. The settlement along the Mississippi has essentially the same character, only on a larger and more complex scale.

#### Physiography

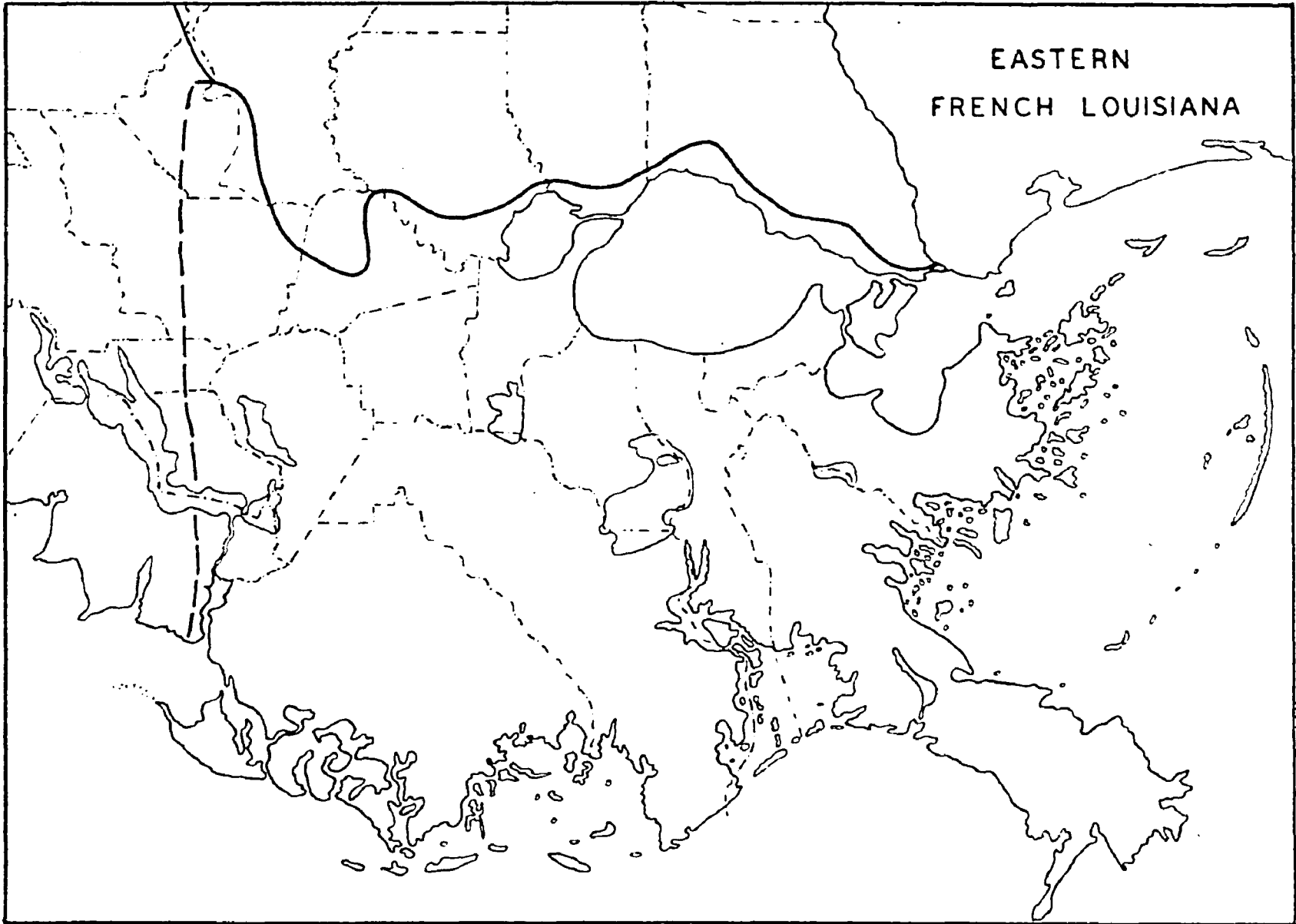
Eastern French Louisiana, excepting the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, lies within the delta of the Mississippi River, and the physiography may be summarily described as deltaic.<sup>7</sup> Elevations above sea level are nowhere great, and differences in elevation are slight,

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<sup>6</sup>Taylor, James W., The Agricultural Settlement Succession in the Prairies of Southwestern Louisiana (unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1956).

<sup>7</sup>Russell, Richard J., "Physiography of the Lower Mississippi River Delta," Lower Mississippi River Delta, La. Geol. Sur. Bull. 8 (1936), 3-199.

EASTERN  
FRENCH LOUISIANA



although very significant from the standpoint of human occupancy. The principal landforms are natural levees. The stream pattern is distributary (Pl. 3). Stream courses diverge downstream, and channels run along the median line of the levee ridges. Between adjacent levee ridges there are basins which may contain a lake or swamp, or along the coast, a bay. Levee ridges consist of a pair of natural levees, one on each side of a stream. The highest elevations in the area are along the levee crests, and south of Baton Rouge no elevations are more than thirty feet above sea level. The crest of a natural levee is near the stream bank, and the slope back from the crest is generally so low that it is not easily recognized.

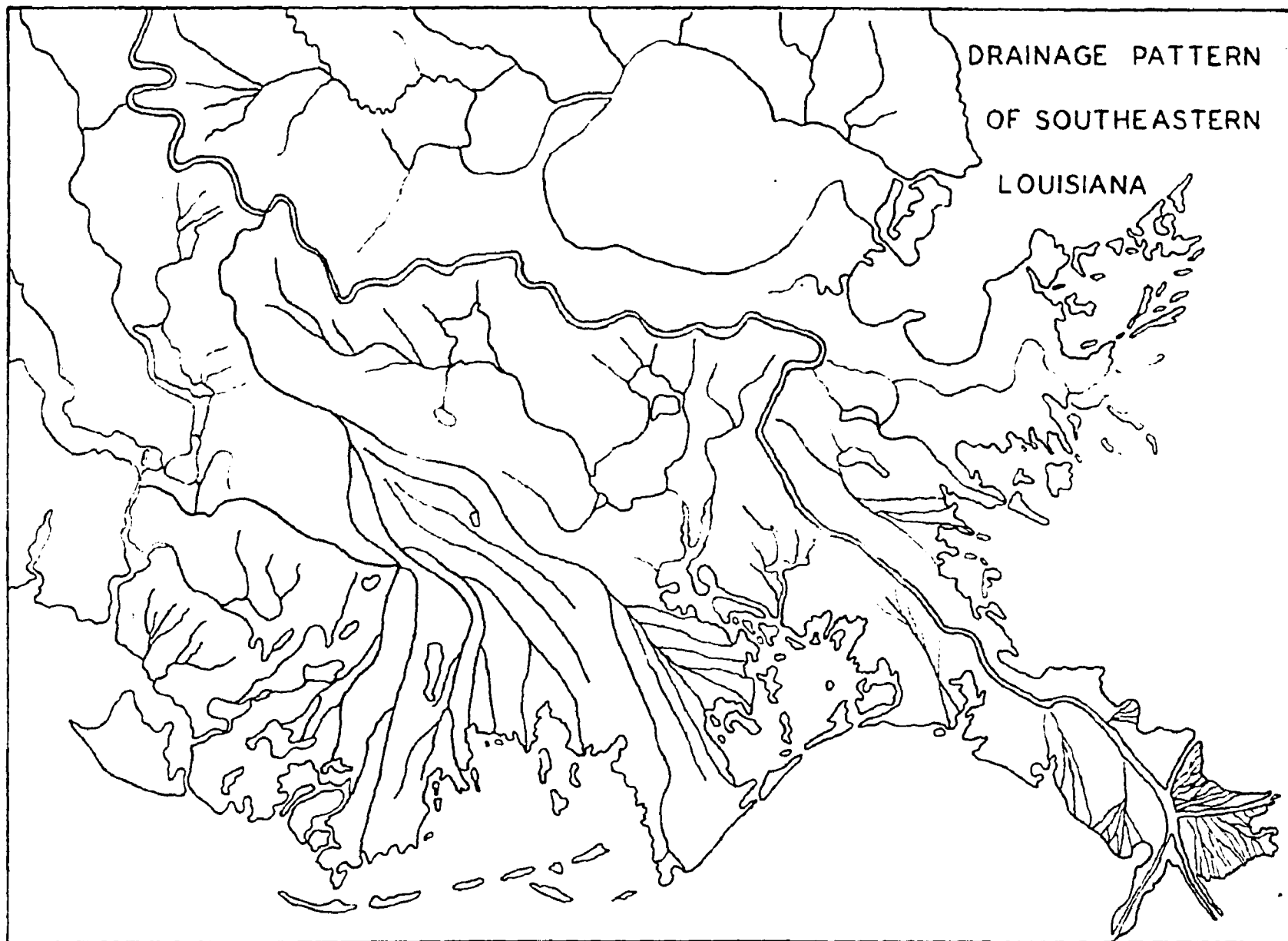
Natural levees are depositional landforms and their height and width are generally proportional to the size of the stream by which they were deposited. Channels which have underfit streams are not those of the streams which presently occupy them. Stream patterns are complex and have changed many times.<sup>8</sup> Large levee ridges occur elsewhere than along the present large streams. All of the larger levees in the area are on former main or distributary channels of the Mississippi River. Within the delta there are many abandoned channels in the typical distributary pattern which are occupied by much diminished or relict streams. Their natural levees belong to earlier times of levee-building. Some of the old levees are not continuous; local subsidence has disrupted the continuity so as to create isolated levee portions. These fragments

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<sup>8</sup>Pisk, Harold N., Geological Investigation of the Alluvial Valley of the Lower Mississippi River (Vicksburg: Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Mississippi River Commission, 1944), pp. 1-78.

Russell, R. J., "Louisiana Stream Patterns," Bull. Amer. Assoc. Pet. Geol., XXIII (1939), 1199-1227.





of higher land are often called coteaux.

Facts other than the distributary pattern of the natural levees are of importance. The height of levee crests above adjacent basins reaches a maximum of about twenty feet on the levees of the Mississippi just south of Baton Rouge. The difference diminishes downstream. Except for the Bayou Lafourche levees, there are no others of a size comparable to those of the present Mississippi. The Bayou Lafourche levees, which belong to a former Mississippi course, are about fifteen feet higher at their crests than at the end of the backslope. The heights of all other natural levees are less. For any single levee the height diminishes toward the distal end of the stream, so that as a general rule levees disappear in the marshes before reaching the coast. Some project into open water for a distance, as in the case of the Mississippi passes. Higher ground is usually reached by following levees to their proximal end. Such a course would eventually reach the main stream, the Mississippi, in most cases.

Natural levees are not of uniform width throughout their course, nor are they always of equal width on opposite sides of a stream. The width of a natural levee might be taken as the distance from the stream bank to the limit of cultivation on the backslope, or to low, wet ground. A levee ridge would be approximately twice the width of a single levee plus the width of the stream. Some examples of wide levees are those of the Mississippi just south of Baton Rouge, and those of upper Bayou Lafourche. On the right bank of the Mississippi near White Castle the levee measures about six miles. Three to four miles is a more representative figure for the Mississippi natural levees from Baton Rouge through St. James Parish. In St. John the Baptist Parish and southward few places

are wider than three miles. Below English Turn one mile is about the maximum, and the width diminishes to the extent that the road on the left bank stops at Bohemia and that on the right bank at Venice. In a similar way the levees of Bayou Lafourche diminish from three to four miles in width near Donaldsonville to almost nothing near the coast. The scale is smaller but the feature is the same along many bayous in the delta. Some inhabited levees are only inches higher than the marsh level and only wide enough to hold a small house.

The basins and flatlands between levee ridges comprise a much greater proportion of the total surface. Inland, higher elevations are about five feet. Toward the coast the elevation drops to sea level. The lowest parts of the basins inland are generally occupied by deltaic lakes; some examples of large ones are Lake Salvador, Lac des Allemands, and Lake Verret. Smaller basins have smaller lakes.

Other types of physiographic features which stand above the general level of the land are barrier beaches and beach ridges. The large islands which fringe the coast are of barrier-beach origin. Some man-made features, Indian mounds and middens, are conspicuous in the region, especially in the marshes.<sup>9</sup> There they stand higher than any natural elevation and have an entirely different vegetational covering.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Kniffen, F. B., "A Preliminary Report on the Indian Mounds and Middens of Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes," Lower Mississippi River Delta, La. Geol. Sur. Bull. 8 (1936), 407-422.

McIntire, W. G., Correlation of Prehistoric Settlements and Delta Development, Trafficability and Navigability of Louisiana Coastal Marshes, Technical Report No. 5, Coastal Studies Institute, La. State Univ., Baton Rouge, 1954, pp. 2-12.

<sup>10</sup>Brown, C. A., "The Vegetation of the Indian Mounds, Middens, and Marshes in Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes," Lower Mississippi River Delta, La. Geol. Sur. Bull. 8 (1936), 423-440.

## Vegetation

Vegetational patterns are complex.<sup>11</sup> The driest lands on the delta are the tops of the natural levees. The backslope of a levee descends toward more aqueous conditions: open water, marsh, or swamp. Vegetational zonation normal to the slope of the land is marked. Ecological conditions are controlled by two factors; soil moisture and salinity. The effects of both are expressed regionally, with the slope of the delta, and locally, with the slope of the natural levees. The greatest number of zones for a short distance occurs locally, along the levee slopes, for edaphic conditions change rapidly with the slope. Adjustments are so delicate that a relief difference of only inches can induce a considerable change in the type of vegetation. There are many degrees of water and salt tolerance among the many species of grasses, sedges, and rushes. A broader and more fundamental zonation exists where the difference is one between grass and tree vegetation. These differences are pronounced and most important from the standpoint of human occupancy.

The least hydrophytic conditions along the high parts of natural levees permit a growth of trees. The species which characterize this vegetation are: live oak (Quercus virginiana), cherrybark oak (Q. pagoda), water oak (Q. nigra), and many other species of oak, redgum (Liquidambar styraciflua), American elm (Ulmus americana), winged elm (U. alata),

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 423-440.

Penfound, W. T. and Hathaway, E. S., "Plant Communities in the Marshlands of Southeastern Louisiana," Ecological Monographs, VIII (1938), 1-56.

O'Neil, Ted, The Muskrat in the Louisiana Coastal Marshes (New Orleans: La. Dept. of Wild Life and Fisheries, 1949), pp. 7-34, Fig. 62.

Russell, R. J., "Flotant," Geog. Rev. XXXII (1942), 74-98.

honeylocust (Gleditsia triacanthos), pecan (Carya illinoensis), and persimmon (Diospyros virginiana).<sup>12</sup> Palmetto (Sabal minor) is a distinctive undergrowth plant. Before extensive settlement, thick forests of such trees and cane brakes covered the higher lands along the bayous. As the oaks are the most representative trees, such a vegetation is called a chênière (an oak forest). Chênière (Eng. *chenier*) is properly a vegetational term, but it has a topographic connotation, i. e., a place where oak trees grow. It also has been given a physiographic meaning.<sup>13</sup> Situations other than natural levees may provide habitats suitable for such a vegetation. Two features are Indian mounds and barrier beaches. The fact of importance is that the vegetation will exist regardless of the origin of the high ground. Today, the word is customarily reserved for other situations and places than the inhabited levees, for those are mainly cleared and the term no longer applies.

The outstanding species of the chênière is the live oak. It is the most likely to survive when habitat conditions become inimicable to tree growth, and is the last tree to disappear as the natural levees diminish toward the coast. Generally, levees become too narrow for human occupancy before the last live oak is reached. Perhaps because of its beauty, shade, and protection, it has been spared by the bayou inhabitant in his removal of the native vegetation, and it remains today as the characteristic tree of the bayou settlement.

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<sup>12</sup>Brown, C. A., Louisiana Trees and Shrubs, La. Forestry Commission Bull. No. 1 (1945), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup>Russell, R. J. and Howe, H. V., "Cheniers of Southwestern Louisiana," Geog. Rev., XXIV (1934), 449-461.

North of the marshes, swamp vegetation grows in the basins where fresh water stands part of the year. The characteristic trees are cypress (Taxodium distichum) and tupelogram (Nyssa aquatica). Other species are: swamp blackgum (N. sylvatica var. biflora), water ash (Fraxinus caroliniana), pumpkin ash (F. tomentosa), Virginia willow (Itea virginica) and buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis).<sup>14</sup> The French term for swamp, cyprière, is taken from the most important tree, the cypress. The wood of this tree was used by the pioneer to make almost everything he needed: houses, barns, sheds, fences, boats and some utensils. It is still a symbol of longevity.

Marsh constitutes another broad category of vegetation, that of grasses, sedges and rushes. Many types of marsh vegetation exist; again the differences are controlled mainly by water and salinity. Two important distinctions are salt marsh and fresh marsh, but within these groups there are many varieties. The term "marsh" generally refers to the marshland, rather than just to the vegetation. The older French term prairie has about the same meaning, a grassland, either wet or dry. The drier coastal marshes to the west are called "prairie marshes," and occasionally even the eastern coastal marshes are called "prairies." Different kinds of marshland are distinguished according to their stability. Conditions vary from surfaces that are quite firm and are easily crossed on foot to those that require the assistance of a boat. The principal types of marsh in the area are: fresh marsh, floating fresh marsh, tidal salt marsh, brackish three-cornered grass

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<sup>14</sup>Brown, Louisiana Trees and Shrubs, p. 9.

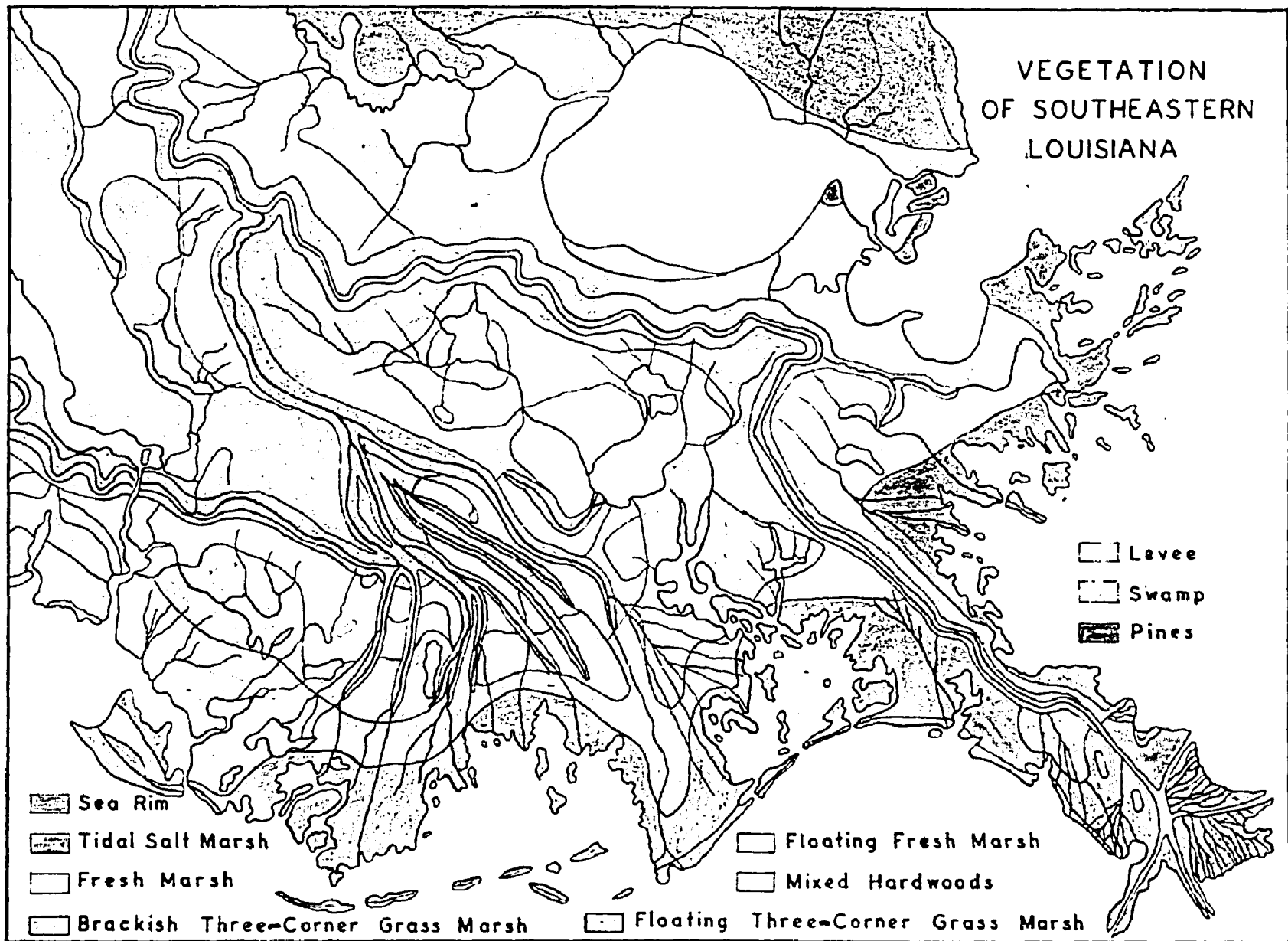
marsh, and floating three-cornered grass marsh.<sup>15</sup> Plate 4 is a map of the vegetation of the region.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>O'Neil, op. cit., pp. 7-34, Fig. 61.

<sup>16</sup>Explanation of Plate 4 (marsh vegetation adapted from O'Neil).

1. Fresh Marsh: cattail (Typha spp.), roseau cane (Phragmites communis), fresh marsh three-cornered grass (Scirpus americanus), dog-tooth grass (Panicum repens), yellow cutgrass (Zizaniopsis miliacea), oyster grass (Spartina alterniflora), water hyacinth (Eichornia crassipes), and alligator grass (Alternanthera philoxeroides).
2. Floating Fresh Marsh: paille fine or canouche (Panicum hemitomon).
3. Tidal Salt Marsh: black rush (Juncus roemerianus), wiregrass (Spartina patens), oyster grass, and saw grass (Cladium jamaicense).
4. Brackish Three-Cornered Grass Marsh: a single dominant, three-cornered grass (Scirpus olneyi).
5. Floating Three-Cornered Grass Marsh: the same dominant as 4 but very mucky earth.
6. Sea Rim: beach ridges and barrier beaches with a chênière vegetation.
7. Levee: natural levees with a chênière vegetation.
8. Swamp: cyprière vegetation.
9. Mixed Hardwoods: chênière vegetation plus cow oak (Q. prinus), Nuttall oak (Q. nuttallii), overcup oak (Q. lyrata), cedar elm (Ulmus crassifolia), green ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica var. lanceolata), boxelder (Acer negundo), and hackberry (Celtis laevigata).
10. Pines: terrace lands with longleaf pine (Pinus palustris), slash pine (P. caribaea), spruce pine (P. glabra), and loblolly pine (P. taeda).





### Physiography and the Cultural Landscape

A knowledge of the fundamentals of the physiography of the Delta is essential to an understanding of the gross aspects of the settlement pattern. There is an orderly arrangement of the cultural forms in a pattern created by the physiography. Virtually all settlements are on natural levees, as those are the only features that provide enough high ground. Barrier beaches have been settled in the past, and one of importance exists today, Grand Isle. In addition to the fact that they are remote, they are open to attack by the occasional hurricanes which reach the Louisiana coast, and have such a record of disaster that they are no longer very attractive as sites for settlement.<sup>17</sup>

The width of a levee places certain positive restrictions on the amount of land that might be cultivated, and in some places there is none after the dwellings have been built. Economies bear a close relationship to the physical qualities of the land. The marshlands and coastal waters provide the basis for such distinctive occupations as those of the trapper, shrimp fisherman, and oysterman.

Aside from such facts, the physical as well as the cultural features of the land contribute to its unique appearance. The Delta is the land on which the people live, and many of them, especially the trapper, fisherman, and those who have similar livelihoods, must know the land well. The directions for any bayou dweller are determined

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<sup>17</sup>Hearn, Lafcadio, Chita: A Memory of Last Island (New York: Harper and Bros., 1889). This novel describes one of the worst storms and its destruction of Isle Derniere, which has not been inhabited since.



Fig. a. Natural Levee in Swamp



Fig. b. Natural Levee in Marsh



Fig. c. Natural Levee with Settlement

TYPES OF ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS  
TO NATURAL LEVEE TOPOGRAPHY  
Vertical Exaggeration Approximately 300 Times

by the topography. The word "front" means the land nearest the bayou, and "back" means toward the backswamp, or away from the bayou. The two most important directions are la bas (down the bayou) and la haute (up the bayou).

## Chapter II

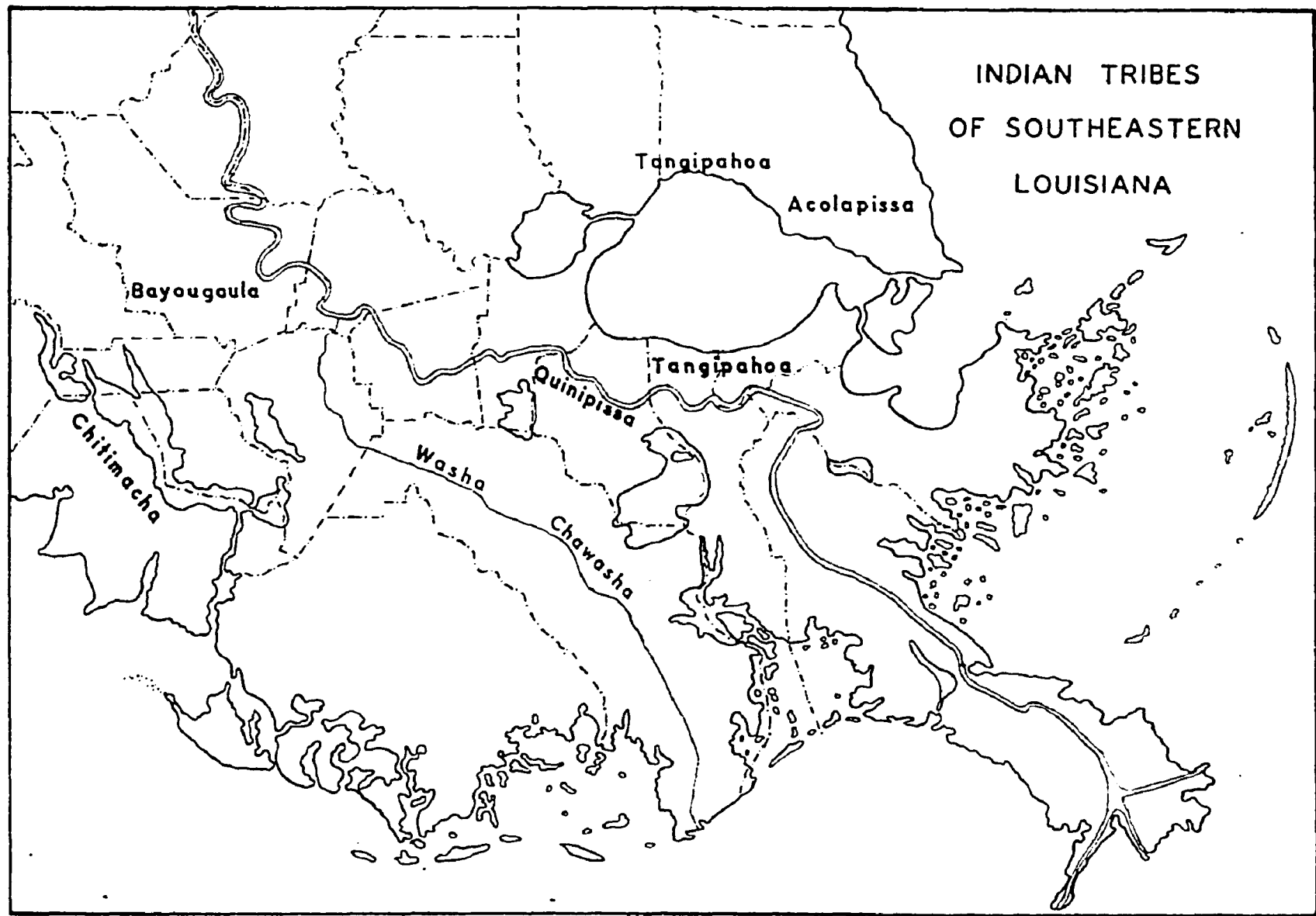
### The Cultural Background

#### Indians

Almost any settlement succession in the Americas begins with the aboriginal population. In many obvious and subtle ways the American Indian influenced European settlers as they established themselves on the new continents. Undoubtedly, some part of the success of many settlements was due to the Indians. They provided the settler with new crops and agricultural methods where European agriculture did not prove successful. Frontiersmen must have learned much frontier lore from the Indian, which aided them in opening new lands. A simple listing of traits known to have been borrowed by the European from the Indian would be impressive, but would not yield a complete measure of influence. There are spheres where measurement is not possible.

It would not be feasible to examine the entire ethnography of all the tribes in the area, but such a treatment would come closest to revealing the totality of influences that the Indians had on the French settlers. It would be difficult to determine with any certainty that similar traits between Indian and European would indicate adoption by one or the other. The main interchange would have come during the frontier period, and the chief influences would most likely be found in those activities most essential to life, viz., the acquisition of food and clothing, the building of shelters, and transportation.

The Indian tribes and approximate village sites in the nuclear area of initial French settlement in southeastern Louisiana at the beginning of the European settlement are given in Plate 6. The tribes



and their general locations according to Swanton are listed below.<sup>1</sup>

| <u>Tribe</u> | <u>Villages</u>  |
|--------------|--|
| Chitimacha   | Lower Bayou Teche<br>Bayou Grosse Tete<br>Grand River<br>Upper Bayou Lafourche |
| Washa        | Middle Bayou Lafourche<br>Mississippi River below New Orleans                  |
| Chawasha     | Same as Washa  |
| Houma        | Near Angola  |
| Okelousa     | Upper Atchafalaya River  |
| Bayougoula   | Bayou Goula  |
| Quinipissa   | Near Hahnville   |
| Tangipahoa   | North and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain                                   |
| Acolapissa   | Lower Pearl River  |
| Tensas       | Lake St. Joseph  |
| Avoyel       | Near Marksville<br>Near Alexandria   |
| Natchez      | Near Natchez, Miss.  |

The large number of tribes indicates significant cultural differences, but in general there was considerable homogeneity in those things concerning settlement. It is possible to characterize them for the area.<sup>2</sup> At the time of its discovery by Europeans, all of native Louisiana was included in an economic region known as the Eastern Maize Area. The

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<sup>1</sup>Swanton, J. R., Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coasts of the Gulf of Mexico, Bur. Amer. Ethn. Bull. 43 (1911), pp. 7-36, Pl. 1.

<sup>2</sup>DuPratz, Le Page, The History of Louisiana (New Orleans: Pelican Press, 1947, reprint of the 1774 ed.), pp. 279-357.

Kniffen, F. B., "The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana," La. Conservation Rev., IV (1935), 5-12.

Swanton, op. cit., pp. 67-79.

people were semisedentary and lived in virtually permanent villages near bodies of water. Some food was secured by hunting and fishing, but agriculture was more important, and relatively large fields were cultivated. Maize, beans, and pumpkins were the important crops in that order. Fields were cleared by tree-deadening and burning and would have to be shifted after a short term of years. The chief agricultural tool was made of a curved stick, usually of walnut, which served as a hoe or spade. Wild foods, such as palmetto hearts, water-lily seeds, persimmons, and various nuts, were gathered. Fresh- and salt-water fish were caught with spears, harpoons, hooks, nets, and traps. Along the coast, shellfish, especially clams, were of great importance. Bison were not numerous except in the prairies of southwestern Louisiana. Bear and deer were the two most important large game animals. Smaller game was taken with snares and the blowgun. The only domesticated animal of the Louisiana Indians was the dog.

All of the tribes in the Mississippi Valley from the Tensas southward built rectangular, rounded-roof dwellings of wattle-daub construction covered with palmetto leaves, reeds, or cane mats. Along the coast the Indians lived in palmetto houses. Throughout the area the dugout was the only kind of boat. The domestic arts included the making of pottery, and baskets of split canes. The basketry of the Chitimacha was exceptionally fine. An important tool was the mortar, which was hollowed from a section of log. This was used with a pestle for grinding corn. Clothing consisted of deerskin breechcloths and skirts, buffalo robes, and mantles woven from strips of mulberry bark.

### European Settlement

The European settlement of the area was accomplished largely by the French. There were also large settlements of Spaniards, Germans, and Italians. Each of these different peoples came to the new land with ideas of the proper way to enclose and shelter their living and working activities. Evolving culture patterns were open to many stimuli from cultural contacts which shaped and directed the evolution. Undoubtedly each ethnic group added something of its own which was assimilated in the basic pattern. In addition to cultural stimuli, the pioneer groups were required to make certain concessions to the physical environment. The materials and resources with which they had to work were not the same as those of the lands from which they came. In addition to this, the land surface to which they had to adapt their activities was quite different from their homelands.

Not long after settlement was begun, the frontier was in contact with the Anglo-American settlement coming down from the north and the Spanish-Mexican coming in from the west. This situation offered an ample opportunity for an exchange of ideas among the different groups. Thus the patterns of settlement which exist today in French Louisiana have gradually evolved from those established by the pioneer groups. In the course of this evolution the changes which took place were not all endemic. The basic pattern which was laid down by the pioneer group was constantly modified and augmented by external as well as internal events. New inventions and techniques developed within and without the area continuously provided the means to change the structures and artifacts used. The cumulative effect of this process of change and introduction has been to produce the complex patterns of the present.



The earliest scene of French activity was along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. After finding sites along the Mississippi River too difficult of access, the French began work April 8, 1699, on Fort Maurepas on the Bay of Biloxi at the present site of Ocean Springs. A more important settlement, Fort Louis de la Louisiane, was made in 1702 on the Mobile River at Twenty-seven Mile Bluff.<sup>3</sup> The site proved to be a poor one, and in 1710, after a serious flood the year before, the fort was moved to the present site of Mobile. These places, along with forts on Dauphine Island (Massacre Island) and Ship Island (Isle aux Vaisseaux), comprised the nuclear area of French activity for about twenty years. Rewards were much less than the initial expectations. Precious minerals were not found, trade with Indians and Canadians was not significant, and Spaniards were not interested in assisting a competitor. Settlements were not self-sustaining for some time. The early settlers were not colonists. In 1704 the non-military population of the colony was only twenty-five families, who lived in palmetto huts. They hunted and fished, and although they maintained gardens, they depended on ships from France for staples. Complaints of the sterility of the soil were probably made by those who were not farmers.

After the failure of the royal management, the colony was given to a succession of private persons and companies. In 1712 it went to Antoine Crozat, at which time the population consisted of 300 settlers, 100 soldiers, and 75 Canadians. In 1717 the colony went to the Western Company, called the Company of the Indies after 1719. The company began

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<sup>3</sup>Hamilton, P. J., Colonial Mobile (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), p. 38.

a policy of recruiting settlers with exaggerated claims as to the productivity of the land. Those who could not buy land from the concessioners were given land after they had worked it for a certain length of time. Those settlers were called engagés. The first important group of engagés did not arrive until 1718, at which time the population of Louisiana was only 700. Engagés were obtained from both France and Germany. Most of the French colonists were exiles rather than farmers, and thus were little suited to their task. The concessioners and the company complained about the quality of the people who were sent from France.

The Germans proved to be excellent pioneers. In his critical study of the Germans, Deiler<sup>4</sup> finds that actually very few reached the colony. Approximately 6,000 Germans left Europe for Louisiana. They were farmers who came from the Palatinate, Alsace, Lorraine, Baden, Wurtemberg, Mainz, and Trier. The treatment of these people by the French administrators and concessioners was notoriously bad. They were allowed to remain for years in the ports of Europe, and when they arrived in Louisiana many starved on the ships while awaiting the distribution of land and supplies. Deiler concludes that only 2,000 Germans were actually disembarked at Biloxi and Dauphine Island. Approximately 1,000 are believed to have starved to death while awaiting disembarkation. The company was not prepared for the sudden success of its promotional schemes, for in one day in 1718 the population was more than doubled by the arrival of 800 people, some of whom were the German

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<sup>4</sup>Deiler, J. Hanno, The Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana (Philadelphia: American Germanica Press, 1909), pp. 8-16.

engagés. Allowing for that, the further treatment of these people indicates the grossest incompetence or indifference, or both, on the part of the company officials.

The center of settlement for the colony was continuously shifted toward the Mississippi Valley. By 1720 there were settlements at Natchitoches (1714), New Biloxi (1718), New Orleans (1718), Baton Rouge (1720), Fort Rosalie (Natchez, 1720), and Yazoo Post (Vicksburg, 1720). The capital was moved westward in the wake of the frontier. It went from Dauphine Island to Fort Maurepas in 1719, from there to New Biloxi in 1720, and from there to New Orleans in 1722. By 1721, settlements of an agricultural nature had spread from the fort sites. Those around New Orleans were the most extensive. There were settlements on Bayou St. John, Tchoupitoulas (near Southport), and Gentilly. Across the river was Petit Desert (near Westwego). There were plantations below New Orleans to English Lookout, and also above New Orleans a short distance. Then came Cannes Brulees (near Kenner).<sup>5</sup>

That section of the Mississippi which was settled by the Germans became known as La Cote des Allemands. During the Spanish Period (1768-1803) it was called El Puerto de los Alemanes, and was later divided into a Primera Costa (St. Charles Parish), and a Segunda Costa (St. John the Baptist Parish). From the initial settlement on the right bank, the German Coast eventually included both sides of the river from about twenty-five miles above New Orleans to about forty-five river miles. According to Deiler there were two villages of German

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<sup>5</sup>Cruzat, Heloise H., "Sidelights on Louisiana History," La. Hist. Quart. I (1918), 87-153.

DuPratz, op. cit., pp. 48, 52, 141.

habitants (not engagés) prior to the arrival of the Germans who abandoned John Law's Arkansas concession in 1722. These villages were located about one mile inland on the right bank of the Mississippi about thirty miles up the river from New Orleans. They were partially abandoned after a hurricane in 1721, and a new village was constructed along the river front. The German engagés who left Law's Arkansas concession were allowed to settle on both sides of the new village. The census of 1722 gives the number of inhabitants along this coast as 257. Below English Turn, in Law's concession, there were seventy more Germans. A few other families were engagés on the concessions north of New Orleans.

The census of 1724 gives the extent of the German Coast as approximately from the present town of Lucy to about two miles north of Hahnville, and the population as 167. The decrease was due to the fact that flooding had forced many to leave and become engagés on the concessions near New Orleans. In 1728 all concessions between Manchac and the Gulf were cancelled because concessioners were not fulfilling their obligations. These lands then became open to settlement and the engagés on former concessions and the habitants from the German Coast began to settle the left bank across from the German Coast. In 1731 the population of the German Coast alone was only 174.<sup>6</sup>

The Germans were never very numerous and the growth of their settlements was entirely internal. They received no new reinforcements and so were gradually assimilated by the French. The gallicization as far as ethnography is concerned must have been complete from almost the

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<sup>6</sup>Deiler, op. cit., pp. 73-75.

beginning. If there is anything which they have contributed to the ethnography of French Louisiana, it has been completely obscured by the overwhelming French culture. Their mark was made in other ways. Much of the success of the colony was due to their perseverance during the frontier period. Most of them were hard-working peasants, and were well known for that quality. They intermarried with the French and their numbers and prosperity increased steadily. Their German names were altered by French religious and civil clerks from the time records were first kept. Today their descendants comprise a significant proportion of the population, but they are recognizable only by their names.

Pioneer subsistence agriculture in the colony is exemplified by the German habitant. For a while, the Germans were the only small farmers. Actually most of the French planters were little better off. The first "plantations" were nothing more than pioneer farms. The Company of the Indies could not even provide the concessioners with the necessary tools and animals. The tools of the habitant were the hoe, spade, broadaxe, and pickaxe. With these he had to open virgin land and build a farm. The task of clearing the land must have been difficult, and the method used was very similar to that used by the Indians.<sup>7</sup> Once the land was cleared, there were many other tasks which required hard labor. Only a few had the assistance of engagés and Negro slaves. There were no draft animals for some time. Not a single horse was listed for the German Coast in the census of 1731.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Du Pratz, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

<sup>8</sup>Deiler, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

The chief subsistence crops were maize, rice, and beans.<sup>9</sup> Attempts were made to grow wheat, barley, rye, and oats, and although early accounts indicated that these grains were quite successful, actually only small amounts were grown. Most every country house had a vegetable garden. Sweet potatoes were a new food, grown and stored in a manner that was discontinued only a few decades ago.

Various non-food commercial crops were experimented with or were considered by plantation owners. Silk was early looked upon as a product suitable to the plantation system. Several kinds of mulberry trees were native to the region. The only disadvantage was that the trees grew in scattered locations in woods and cane brakes. For this reason, some planters thought silk production would require too much labor. Those in favor thought the mulberry trees could be cultivated. Silk was actually produced in the early days, but it never became important. Cotton was grown by the first planters. Everything was in its favor except the task of removing the fiber from the seed. The first successful crops and the ones which established the plantation system in Louisiana were indigo and tobacco. Indigo was the most important. It grew wild in the lower Mississippi Valley, but the cultivated plant was introduced from the West Indies.

In addition to the experiments in commercial agriculture, an effort was made to exploit almost everything the land offered. Few of these items provided the means of sustained livelihood. The list included: furs, deer skins, bear oil, wax of the wax-tree,

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-59.

Du Pratz, op. cit., pp. 163-166, 201-208. Du Pratz operated a plantation and traveled in Louisiana from 1718 to 1734. He gives a complete account of early agriculture.

timber (cypress, oak, pine, elm, ash, cedar, and black walnut), naval stores, saffron, hemp, medicinals (sassafras, sarsaparilla, esquine, sweet-gum balm), dye woods, saltpeter, bricks, and tiles.<sup>10</sup>

In 1731 the management of the Louisiana colony was returned to the government of France. About this time the population was 5,000 whites and 2,000 Negroes. There were rural settlements of importance on the upper part of Bayou Lafourche, on the Mississippi at Bayou Manchac, around Baton Rouge, at Pointe Coupee, and at Natchitoches, in addition to those along the Mississippi above and below New Orleans. By 1745 the colony was exporting quantities of rice, tobacco, and indigo. Trade ties were extended to the Illinois country, and furs, hides, pork, flour, and whiskey were exchanged for the Louisiana products. Cotton and sugar were sent up the river.

The Isle of Orleans and the territory west of the Mississippi were ceded to Spain in 1763 as a result of the Seven Years' War and the Treaty of Paris. Except for a few weeks in 1803, Spain controlled the colony until it became a territory of the United States in 1803. Spanish control was not effective at first, and when it was impressed upon the people they accepted it with resentment.

Before Spain gained effective control of the colony, it received another influx of people of French descent. These were the Acadians, the people driven from Acadia (Nova Scotia) by the British after 1744. They sought refuge in Europe and along the Atlantic coast of North America. They were accepted in great numbers, approximately 4,000,

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<sup>10</sup>Cruzat, "Sidelights," p. 98.

Du Pratz, op. cit., pp. 177-182.

by their cultural kin, the Louisiana French. The first and most destitute arrivals were given land, equipment, and supplies. Beginning about 1765, they were settled on the Mississippi above and below New Orleans (the Upper and Lower Acadian Coasts), around False River, on upper Bayou Lafourche, and along Bayou Teche. These people were not identical to the Louisiana French, and the distinction exists today. The Acadians are distinguished by the term "Cajun," a corruption of the word Acadian, and the other Louisiana French are called "Creoles." The difference is an important one from the cultural standpoint. Although the word "Creole" is not used in its original sense, it is still used to distinguish the non-Acadian Louisiana French, who are actually the descendents of the Creoles.<sup>11</sup> The Acadian influence along the Mississippi no longer is distinguishable. The settlements in Iberville Parish and the upper part of Bayou Lafourche are distinguishable, but are not always thought of as Acadian. The distinct Acadian country today is that along the Bayou Teche and southwestern Louisiana.

During the administration of Governor Galvez (1777-1785) attempts were made to overcome the French culture with Spanish. Spaniards were taken from the Canary Islands and the mainland and established in Louisiana at government expense. The Isleños, as all these later Spaniards were called, were settled along Bayou Terre aux Boeuf in

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<sup>11</sup>The word Creole is supposed to be a Negro corruption of the Spanish criadillo, diminutive of criado, a servant, follower, client; literally one bred, brought up (Century Dictionary), or the Spanish criollo, from Portuguese crioulo, from criar, to bring up (Webster's Dictionary). In the Spanish West Indies the Europeans (Spaniards) ranked first in the social order, those born in the colonies of Spanish parents were second. The word as originally used in Louisiana had the same meaning, except that the European descent was French, and/or Spanish.



St. Bernard Parish, Bayou Lafourche, the Amite River (Galveztown), and New Iberia on the Teche. At a later time they were marked as being unique,<sup>12</sup> but today there does not seem to be any part of their ethnography which has survived. Place names and surnames have survived, and the language is still spoken by a few in the Terre aux Boeuf area, where the Isleños still retain their identity.

The plantation economy of Louisiana was seriously endangered by the destruction of the indigo crop for three successive years, 1793-1796. The plants were attacked by a caterpillar against which there was little defense. The industry never recovered, for a new crop, sugar cane, took its place. Attempts had been made to grow sugar cane in Louisiana from the earliest times, but it was for long not commercially important. It was used to make rum (tafia), at that time about the only distilled drink in common use. The first sugar mill was built in 1785, but it was not until 1795 that a process was devised whereby sugar could be made on a commercial scale. This event established sugar cane as the primary plantation crop in the area where it is now grown.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the pressure of Anglo-American settlement was strong against the frontiers of the Louisiana colony. The colony itself with its port of New Orleans was already essential to the settlements of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Illinois. Spanish governors were warned against allowing too many Anglo-Americans to enter the colony. As the flood of settlement increased, and Spain's control weakened, the colony was ceded to France. A few years later,

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<sup>12</sup>Fortier, A., Louisiana Studies (New Orleans: Hansell Bros., 1894), pp. 197-210.

in 1803, the purchase of the territory by the United States was accomplished. The territorial period (1803-1812) marks the time when French Louisiana suffered the greatest impact of the Anglo-American settlement invasion.

A contemporaneous event of great significance was the practical application of cotton ginning in Louisiana. The gin was invented in 1792, but its effect was not felt until after the transfer of Louisiana. The territorial period marks the establishment of cotton as a plantation crop. From the time of the purchase to 1810, the slave population of Louisiana doubled. This was due in part to the fact that sugar cane was now produced on a commercial scale. Where sugar cane could not be grown, cotton became the profitable crop. Much of the land was not occupied, and it was open to the American planters.

At the time of transfer, the population of the colony was about 50,000. New Orleans accounted for about 10,000 of these and the rest were in the rural districts. The banks of the Mississippi were fairly well populated from below New Orleans to the mouth of Bayou Lafourche. This string of settlements was recognized as consisting of several parts: the Lower Coast (below New Orleans), St. Bernard (the Isleños), Bayou St. John, the Upper Coast (New Orleans to present parish of St. Charles), the German Coast (St. Charles and part of St. John the Baptist), the First and Second Acadian Coasts (the remainder of St. John the Baptist, St. James, and Ascension parishes). Acadian settlements extended down Bayou Lafourche from its mouth at Donaldsonville to about Thibodaux. Beyond these places settlement was scattered: near the mouth of Bayou Manchac, Isleños on the Amite, Baton Rouge, and Pointe Coupee. Acadians in the west had increased on Bayous Teche and

Vermilion. In general, the Acadians and Isleños were small subsistence farmers, and the Creoles (Spanish and French) were planters.

One last influx of French colonials came as a result of the slave rebellion on Santo Domingo. During the year 1809, about 6,000 people entered Louisiana from the Indies. Most of these were planters, some of whom brought slaves. French aristocrats fleeing the Republican regime in France also entered the territory during these times.

In summary, at the time of statehood (1812) all of the culture strains of any magnitude were present, and the process of assimilation was well advanced in some cases. A general gallicization took place among the non-Anglo-American people. The Germans lost rather early. Deiler believes that by the third generation virtually all of the language was gone. Many of the names of German origin were gallicized in the first and second generations. Material culture seems to have been French from the outset. Acadian and Creole remained separate in the non-plantation lands, but there was a general displacement of Acadians by Creole and American planters in those areas where the land was suited to plantation agriculture. The Creole and American planter lived side by side on the same economic level. Their interrelationships became a complex mixture in which the Creole gradually lost out, as far as the cultural struggle was concerned. The Isleños remained distinct only in the Terre aux Boeufs district; it was remote and of no value to one interested in agriculture.

## Chapter III

### The Settlement Pattern

#### Introduction

The pattern of settlement on the Mississippi River Delta is like the topographic grain, for the major drainage by its systems of natural levees has provided the habitable land. Long, continuous lines of closely spaced buildings occur on most of the levees where construction is possible. The elements of which the pattern is composed represent nearly all kinds of settlements. The principal form in this pattern is a linear settlement. The isolated habitation in a dispersed pattern does exist, but that form is numerically insignificant. The linear settlements may be agricultural or not, and they may have parts that are urban in function.

The initial problem encountered in a study of the Louisiana settlements is one of classification and terminology. Complications arise when efforts are made to apply a classificatory system in one place which was devised for use elsewhere. The linear settlements in Louisiana cannot be properly described by the term "street village," or Strassendorf,<sup>1</sup> as is often done. That classification is inappropriate for two reasons. First, the term "street" implies that the street was

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<sup>1</sup>Christaller, Walter, Die Landliche Siedlungsweise im Deutschen Reich und Ihre Beziehungen zur Gemeindeorganisation (Berlin: Einzelschriften des Kommunalwissenschaften Instituts an der Universitat Berlin, 1937). In this comprehensive analysis of settlement forms in Germany, linear villages (Reihendorfer) are classified on the basis of origin. The types recognized are: Marschhufendorfer, Waldhufendorfer, Fehnkolonien, and Gutskolonien. The Strassendorfer are those villages of a linear form which originated along a pre-existent road, and are placed in a separate category.

the feature which induced the linear arrangement of the settlement, or which served as the base from which the land survey was made. Such was not the case in Louisiana, for the road came into being after the land was allotted and settled. At first the chief means of transportation was water, and the bayous served the function of roads. Secondly, the term "village" does not adequately describe the complex internal structure of the settlements. It does not indicate whether or not urban functions are represented, and it conveys some idea of size which is variously interpreted. For the Louisiana settlements the use of the term "village" is suitable in some cases, but it is not generally applicable. The term which best fits the entire pattern, and for which the least number of objections might be offered is "bayou settlement."

The three important aspects of settlement are: form, size, and function. Form alone is not a sufficient criterion for classification. A similarity of form among settlements does not imply a genetic relationship. The most reliable key to origins and aid to a genetic classification of settlement forms is the system of land division. Land must first be allotted before any of the manifestations of ownership or occupancy appear. Therefore, the system of land division is of fundamental importance in any consideration of settlement patterns. For only by such a consideration may the underlying controls be determined. A system of division may be developed irrespective of topographic controls, or may be devised to suit certain topographic conditions. In either case, a system may be transferred or used elsewhere after it becomes established as a culture trait. Thus, a morphological classification would include all linear settlements as a single type, but many kinds of such settlements may be distinguished on the basis of land division systems.

Function and size are related settlement characteristics to some extent. The simple dichotomy of isolated farms and urban trade centers does not always obtain, and there is some possibility of confusion arising from terminology that is not clear. This is especially true of French Louisiana where there occurs one of the least common kinds of settlement in Anglo-America, the agricultural village. In its elementary occurrence, the agricultural village consists of a number of closely spaced dwellings of an agricultural people, which may be arranged in any form, and whose function is primarily residential. Size is no criterion, although if the form permits and the size becomes so great that urban functions dominate, then the factor of size is responsible for a change in function. There is a limit to which an agricultural village may grow without a core of urban characteristics developing. If the dominant economic activity of the populace of a village is in the category of urban services or trade, then the function of the village is urban. In this study the term "village" is reserved for those settlement units which are separate entities and which have a function other than urban. In addition to agricultural villages, there are fishing villages, trapping villages, swamp villages, marsh villages, and combinations of these. They are designated according to the dominant type or site of economic activity. Many of the settlements cannot be called villages because they lack unity.

#### Origin of the Linear Settlement

The origins of the linear settlement form of Louisiana lie in Europe. Whatever implications may be derived from the applicability of such a system to the topography of southern Louisiana, that system was old by the time the first grants of land were made in Louisiana.

Manifestly, the rivers would become the features that would serve as reference lines for the land division. Had those rivers been without natural levees, and had the land been completely flat but satisfactory for settlement, the land division would undoubtedly have been the same. If rivers had not been available for lines of departure, roads or canals would have served the purpose. The system was not devised to suit the particular topographic conditions, even though a system resembling it would probably have been invented if none had existed.

The European connections are clear, but the European origins are somewhat obscure. Linear villages are the dominant settlement form on the North Sea lowlands of mainland Europe (Pl. 7). An extensive literature on the origins of settlement forms of northwestern Europe has not sufficiently settled some questions, and there is no work which critically summarizes all that is currently known. Demangeon<sup>2</sup> in 1927 set forth the many problems involved in the study of settlement forms generally, and analyzed the classic studies of Meitzen, Gradmann, Bernhard and Schlüter concerning the settlement origins in the old Germanic lands. It is clear that most all of the North Sea lands must be considered and that origins extend well into the Middle Ages.

The problem involves more than one settlement form, i.e., the linear village with its rows of houses and narrow, rectangular lots. A system of land division employing such lots may have originated before the linear village in connection with some other settlement form, and the two must not be thought of as inseparable characteristics of one settlement form.

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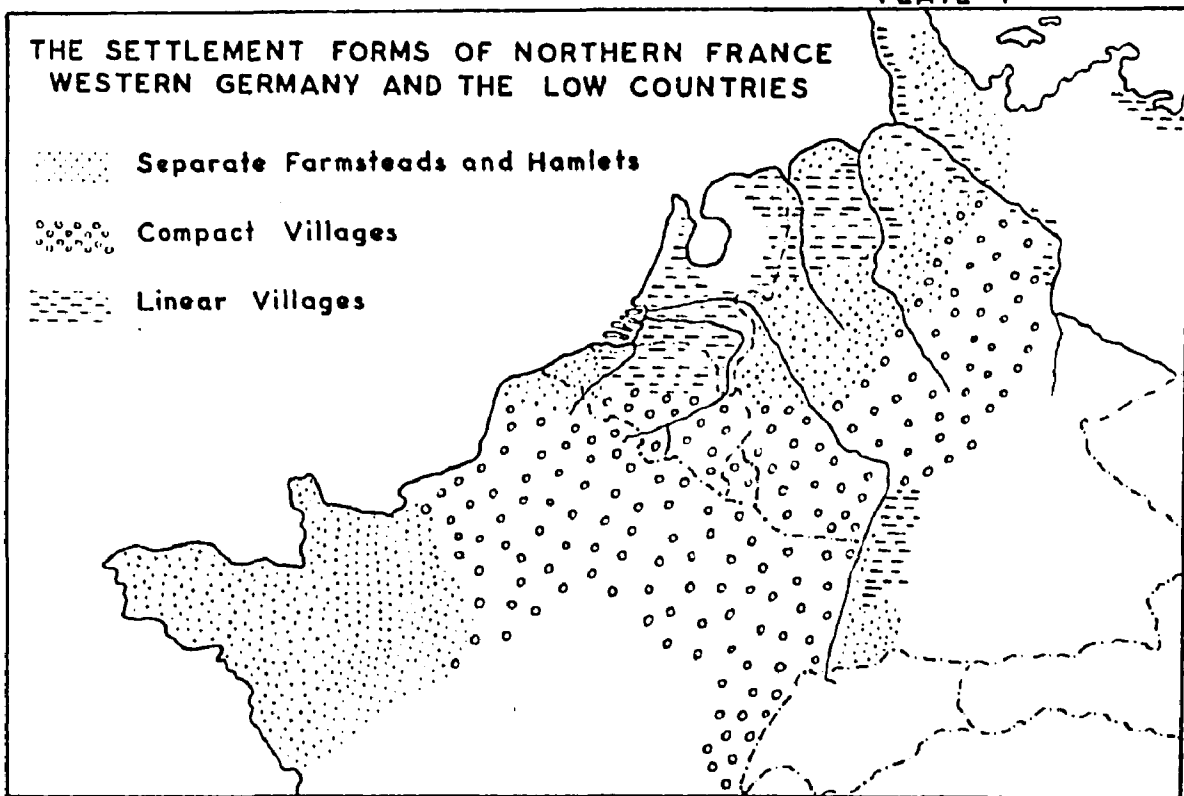
<sup>2</sup>Demangeon, A., "La Géographie de L'Habitat Rural," Annales de Géographie, XXXVI (1927), 1-23, 97-114.

THE SETTLEMENT FORMS OF NORTHERN FRANCE  
WESTERN GERMANY AND THE LOW COUNTRIES

 Separate Farmsteads and Hamlets

 Compact Villages

 Linear Villages





An early instance of the narrow, rectangular lot, known as the mansus regalis, is found in the Frankish Kingdom during the Carolingian dynasty (751-987).<sup>3</sup> The measurement of this piece of land is given as 720 rods by 30 rods, in which case it is thought the rod was twenty-one feet, although it is not definitely known. Dickinson<sup>4</sup> in a study of recent research in Germany on rural settlement, finds that several early systems of land division employed long, narrow lots. German scholars are agreed that the earliest settlement form in northwestern Germany was an open cluster of farmsteads which was surrounded by narrow, rectangular fields which were cultivated communally. This form is known as Bschdorf or Langstreifenflur (long striped fields) mit Drubbel (hamlet). A later form had fields which were arranged in groups called Gewanne and hence the system has been designated Gewannflur. This field system was associated with a village of irregularly clustered farmsteads, which is termed either Gewannndorf or Hautendorf. Dickinson, following Steinbach, believes that this system of Gewannflur mit Hautendorf originally developed from the isolated farmstead in northern France during the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> The interrelationships of these various early forms is not entirely clear, but undoubtedly the long lot appeared at a very early date in conjunction with a village form other than linear. The lands in which these villages occur today were occupied prior to the colonization in the latter part of the Carolingian period (or the area of

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<sup>3</sup>Thompson, James W., "East German Colonization During the Middle Ages," Ann. Rept. Amer. Hist. Assoc., 1915, pp. 125-150.

<sup>4</sup>Dickinson, Robert E., "Rural Settlements in the German Lands," Ann. Assoc. Amer. Geogrs., XXXIX (1949), 239-263.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

Frankish tribes). Most evidence points to the Low Countries as the place of origin for the distinct linear village with the long lot.<sup>6</sup> It is inferred that that type of village resulted from a systematic or organized settlement. From there it spread eastward into Germany along the zone of marsh and moor, which until then had been sparsely settled lands. This form is termed Marschhutendorf (Moorkolonie), and the feature which determines the alignment may be either a river or a canal.<sup>7</sup>

The linear village and the long lot were anciently established in northwestern Europe in several variations and were also associated with colonial land settlement. It is not surprising that, with those precedents, European colonists in the Americas employed such systems. It is more surprising that European settlement in the New World did not follow Old World lines more closely. Given the Old World precedents and a need for collective effort in the initially hostile environments of the New World, it would seem that the tendency for dispersed rural settlement would have been more than counterbalanced by the advantages of agglomerated or grouped rural settlement. Yet, that settlement form was not widespread.<sup>8</sup> In general, where early settlements were compact,

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<sup>6</sup>Dickinson, op. cit., p. 257.  
 Thompson, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>7</sup>This practice was extended into eastern and southern Germany during the German colonization of those lands. The settlement form which arose is designated Waldhutendorf, and it may have a river or a road as its axis. The Hufe was a grant of land whose size varied regionally from 15 to 160 Morgen. A Morgen was "ein Landstuck fur welches Plugarbeit eines Morgens, von Sonnenaufgang bis Mittag, erfahrungsgemass in Anspruch genommen wurde," Thompson, op. cit., 143.

<sup>8</sup>Trewartha, Glen T., "Types of Rural Settlement in Colonial America," Geog. Rev., XXXVI (1946), 568-596.

the tendency towards dispersal increased as the settlement frontier spread inland. Compact villages were established in New England and in the Middle Colonies wherever New Englanders spread. The great cultural complexity of the Middle Colonies insured a variety of settlement forms, but some kind of dispersed pattern was dominant. In both the French and English colonies of the South an entirely new settlement form was developed, the plantation, along with dispersed settlement. Georgia was exceptional in that the earliest settlement was the village type.

Villages with a linear form were the least common type of settlement. Such villages were established by the French, from Louisiana through the Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes area and along the St. Lawrence to Nova Scotia. These were not numerous, but they typified early French settlement. Important connections between Louisiana and the St. Lawrence were: St. Charles and St. Genevieve, Mo., St. Louis, Port de Chartres, Prairie du Pont, Prairie du Rocher, Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Prairie du Chemin, Vincennes, Green Bay, Wis., and Detroit. Agricultural settlements in these places were very much alike, consisting of rows of "ribbon farms."<sup>9</sup> These sites have long since lost all vestiges of their former character, and the linear village survives today in all of its essential characteristics only in Louisiana and the St. Lawrence Valley. In these two areas the linear-village mode of settlement became fixed, and all subsequent growth has followed the initial form.

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<sup>9</sup>Reynolds, John, "Early Agricultural History of Illinois," Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1857-58, pp. 130-133.

### Development in Louisiana

The initial grants of land made by the French in the area that is now Louisiana divided the land into narrow rectangular pieces according to a systematic procedure.<sup>10</sup> The unit of linear measurement was the arpent, which was equivalent to 192 feet. The reference for measuring off a piece of land was a river; at first the Mississippi, and later the smaller streams. The linear distance along the river determined the width of the grant and was designated the "front." The length of any piece was measured perpendicular to the front, and was termed "depth." Although grants varied greatly in width or "frontage," the depth was almost invariably forty arpents regardless of the length of the backslope of the natural levee. This fact is indication enough that the depth of habitable land from the river front to the backswamp, or marsh, was no criterion in establishing the depth of a grant.

Even though early grants were large, the system insured that all subsequent subdivisions would include frontage. Some early grants had frontages of fifty to one hundred arpents, but a royal decree in 1716 ordered that all unimproved lands be regranted in tracts having a frontage of two to four arpents.<sup>11</sup> Subdivisions of holdings were customarily made by dividing a lot lengthwise so as to divide the different qualities of the land evenly. Continual subdivisions have resulted in land holdings that are sometimes under one arpent front.

This system of land division occurs only in those areas in

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<sup>10</sup>Taylor, James W., "Louisiana Land Survey Systems," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, XXXI (1950), 275-282.

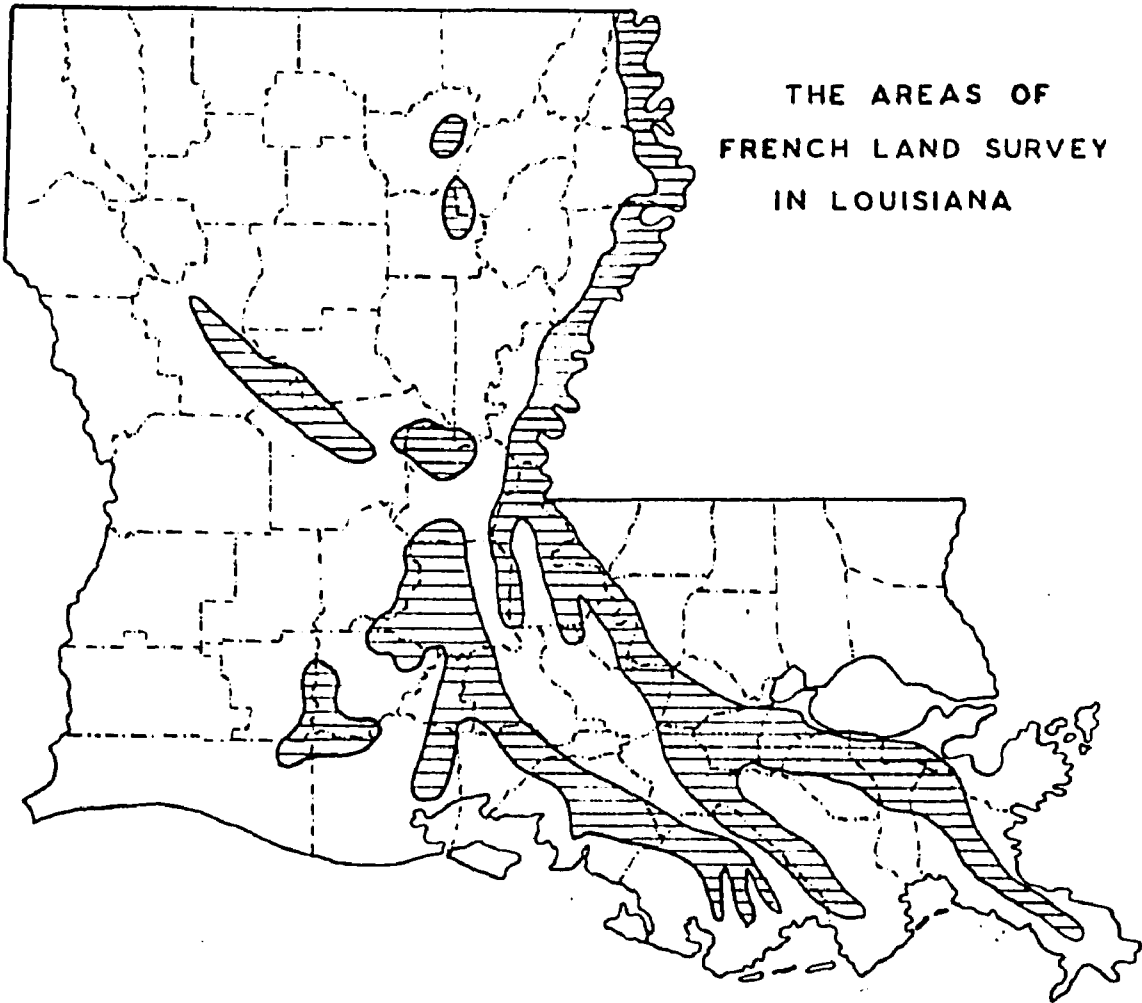
<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

Louisiana which were settled during the French and Spanish colonial periods (Pl. 8). Spanish officials continued the system begun by the French. By the time Louisiana had become a territory of the United States, the French system of land survey had reached such an intricate development that it was either impossible or impractical to adopt any new system, and so its use was continued without any important changes. Most lands that were settled after 1803 were surveyed according to the General Land Office system. Those lands in general correspond to the nonhabitable land in French Louisiana, marsh and swamp, and the lands settled by Americans who arrived after 1803.

#### Structure of the Linear Settlements

The elements of which the linear settlements are composed are easily distinguished, and the manner in which they are assembled follows a simple pattern. Although individual cases may be exceedingly complex, they may be best understood by reference to the general pattern. The Bayou Lafourche settlement typifies this complexity, for there is an almost uninterrupted succession of buildings for about eighty-five miles. Within this distance there are segments of farming and other nonurban populations, and urban centers of various sizes. This pattern is repeated many times on all of the important bayous in the area. Any attempt to divide such a line of settlement into individual villages would have to be arbitrary and would obscure the essential nature of the settlement. The limits set for the incorporated towns do not truly separate them from adjacent settlement. In many instances the nonurban portions between towns and hamlets contain the residences of people who work in the

THE AREAS OF  
FRENCH LAND SURVEY  
IN LOUISIANA



(After Taylor)

adjacent urban centers. This is actually a reversal of the agricultural village form of settlement. The most feasible approach, if such a settlement is to be subdivided truly, would be to determine the trade, service, and residence areas of the urban centers. The nonurban portions between centers could be allied with one center or the other, or be considered independent rural entities in part, if the inhabitants are engaged in nonurban occupations.

This approach would require many microgeographic studies, one for each urban center. The results would be unique for each center and would be valid only for the particular center, although general inferences might be drawn. This would be a study of the function of urban centers within the bayou settlement, and it is unlikely that it would yield meaningful divisions of intervening nonurban settlement. A number of factors not readily observable make the problem difficult. An important consideration is the remarkable fluidity of traffic and movement along any bayou. The automobile in many cases makes the whim of the individual the deciding factor as to which direction he will choose when setting out for a trade center. The mere fact of accessibility is not of conclusive importance. Most bayou settlements have but one road. A few have parallel roads, one on each side, so the location of automobile bridges is a control. All of the urban centers are not of the same size and, therefore, do not have the same kind of services and trade areas. Another factor which complicates the problem is the "rolling store." Buses which sell everything from dry goods to fresh produce operate the full length of the bayous, regardless of what town is their base of operation.

A morphological approach to the problem of distinguishing

homogeneous segments within one bayou settlement is less rewarding than the functional approach. Along the bayous, the lines of buildings are interrupted at irregular intervals by distances of varying lengths which are without buildings. These blank spaces are of little significance in the separation of segments into what might be considered individual villages. Such a distinction would be fallacious. To suggest that any particular segment of continuous dwellings, separated by a blank space of arbitrary distance from further settlement on either side, is any kind of village would imply a distinction which is not real. Seldom does such a separation agree with the trade areas of urban centers or arise from a condition of homogeneity. There are some cases where physical continuity indicates some kind of settlement unit, but it is not a criterion for the recognition of parts or units of a bayou settlement.

The only clearly homogeneous unit of settlement is that which exists along an entire bayou. One may speak, therefore, of the "Bayou Pointe au Chien settlement," or the "Bayou Du Large settlement." Only by such a consideration does the essential pattern emerge in any simplicity. The unifying factor is ultimately the bayou, and it is so considered by the bayou dweller. Each bayou settlement, regardless of length, is a single entity with varying degrees of continuity. Those of some length consist of several parts with different characteristics, and although the different parts are easily distinguished, they merge transitionally into one another in such a fashion that it would not be entirely proper to separate them by such a distinction as "village." Only in a few cases can the term "village" be used with its customary connotation. Urbanization within the settlement can be treated as a



function of the settlement. Rather than attempting to distinguish small urban centers as separate from rural settlement, it would be more realistic to consider them as auxiliary developments of urbanization within the linear pattern, as "concentrations" or "nuclei." With that concept of unity, the structure of each settlement and the entire region can be seen to adhere to a distinct pattern. Size and continuity are matters of degree rather than kind.

The pattern may be illustrated by the map on Plate 9. Only continuous settlements and all but the smallest urban centers are shown on the map; isolated dwellings and very small urban nuclei are not shown because of the scale. Lines of continuous settlement are shown as solid lines. A distance of about one mile without habitations was considered to be of sufficient length to indicate an interruption of continuity. The various segments of lines do not deliberately indicate villages or any kind of unit but merely lines of closely spaced buildings. All urban centers of the smallest category are shown as dots. In order to show them clearly the lines on either side are broken, but this does not indicate an interruption of settlement.

The pattern is seen to consist of long lines of habitations with occasional breaks, and small urban developments about every eight or ten miles. Towns have grown at the convergencies of important bayou settlements. Parallel or double settlements are common. On the Mississippi River and wide bayous, the continuity of settlement generally follows the stream on one side. Where the bayou is narrow, the continuity of settlement extends across the bayou as well as along the side. In the former case, different towns might be opposite each other on the stream, or there may be no parallel development. In the

latter case, it is usually the same town on both sides of the bayou. Twin towns developed at crossings. Usually one town is larger than the other; one grew up as a result of the crossing, the other as a secondary development. These occur at critical points; in the mid-portions of bayou settlements the towns determined the crossings, for only when settlement spread to the opposite bank was there a need to cross from that side to the established towns or urban centers. On narrow bayous the width was not enough to create a situation from which twin towns would arise, and not enough to prevent easy contact so that a single town developed.

#### Urbanization

A consideration of urbanization within the bayou settlements of the present easily leads to an hypothesis of urban growth which seems to fit most cases. Examples to fit hypothetical stages of growth are easily found which permit a supposition of evolution. In the growth of the entire bayou settlement, some kind of trading or business centers would necessarily develop. Because of the elongate form, density of buildings, and manner of settlement growth, certain limitations would be placed on the growth of the urban centers. They would tend to develop laterally within the settlement at any advantageous point. The simplest expression of this tendency today is the occasional nucleus containing a church, school, and a small store. These occur in farming and trapping areas of any settlement density. Those which are associated with the small trapping and farming settlements with densities of two to three farmsteads or dwellings every tenth mile must bear some resemblance to the conditions

which must have existed in the earlier periods in the extremely dense settlements of the present. The school may not have held a position of importance, but undoubtedly the church did. The needs of the almost self-sufficient pioneer settlements could not have been great, so that only a few stores were necessary. Such a simple nucleus became the point of departure from which new business units spread in two directions, up and down the bayou, as the settlement density increased and needs broadened.

In the supposed growth of such a center, it would be necessary for the new business establishments to displace the adjacent dwellings or to become dispersed throughout them. These are two distinct processes that are noted in the growth of the present urban nuclei. First, stores begin to fill the spaces between the farmsteads, and then as the core becomes more urban in character, the farmsteads are displaced. As a result of this the urban center is easily recognized, but its limits are indistinct. As a token of an earlier stage of growth, some of the larger hamlets may still have an active farmstead or two right within the urban core, and the familiar country-town distinctions do not hold. In their essential nature the settlements are continuous from one urban core to the next, but from any core outward in the two directions in which they extend, there is a gradual transition from business establishments and residences of town people to farmsteads or other nonurban types of occupance.

In especially advantageous locations, lateral growth would not provide sufficient room for expansion, and then a modified grid pattern would develop. First departures would be streets perpendicular to the bayou road. Tiers of blocks would gradually grow away from the bayou.

For the smaller town and hamlet the bayou road would generally retain its importance, but for some of the larger towns and cities secondary streets would replace the dominant position of the bayou road. Levee widths would generally permit such growth, for the levee must be large to support a population which would require a large urban center.

The urban centers of the area will fit into three categories which can be designated (1) linear hamlets, (2) T-towns, and (3) grid cities. These categories reflect stages of growth and contain all of those factors relevant to urbanization: size, form, function, and location. Inasmuch as the classification fits the hypothetical sequence of growth, the interrelationship of the several factors embodied in the classification is clear. Size depends upon settlement density and the proximity of other urban centers, as well as location. Form is a manifestation of growth, and function is a matter of location.

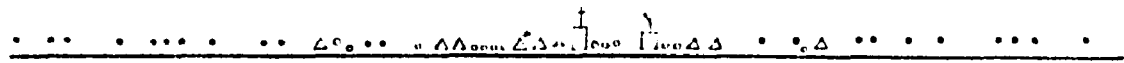
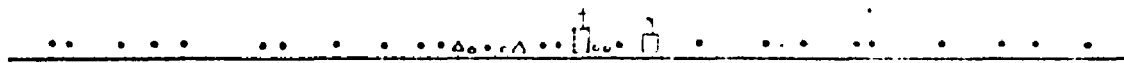
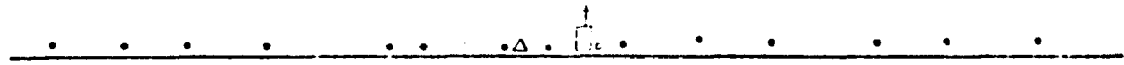
The linear hamlet is the simplest and smallest unit in the classification, and represents the earliest stage in the supposed growth sequence. The population is under 1,000. The linear hamlet is characterized by only one business thoroughfare and that is located along the bayou road. It is usually integrated with the nonurban settlement along the bayou, and residences not belonging to the hamlet are not easily distinguished from those which belong to the country. Its form is actually a function of size. Any hamlet is linear because it must develop along the bayou road. At some stage in its growth nucleation must eventually take a more compact form, for lateral development will not allow indefinite extension.

The size, and therefore the form, will not change appreciably until the demand for more and diversified urban services increases.

The extent to which this takes place depends upon the location of the hamlet with respect to larger towns. If the hamlet lies within that indeterminate distance which represents the length to which people are inclined to go to reach the services they desire in a larger town, it is not likely to experience very rapid growth. The locational factor has two aspects. First, in densely settled areas proximity to larger towns is the deciding factor. Second, in sparsely settled areas the small demand for urban services is the deciding factor. Toward the lower bayous the population is not great enough to support a large urban center and when services are sought which the hamlets cannot provide, the inhabitants are forced to go a greater distance. Less tangible factors are the diminished requirements and prosperity of the lower-bayou folk, and the ease of travelling greater distances.

The linear-hamlet category allows for the several factors of urban growth and represents a realistic distinction. Diagrams of the hamlet growth sequence are given in Plate 10. On lower Bayou Lafourche, for example, Golden Meadow has a definite urban character for approximately two miles on both sides of the core. In the core business units occur at a frequency of about fifteen in one-tenth mile, decreasing in about one mile on both sides to approximately half that number of units. The next center of comparable size to the north is Cut Off, the core of which is separated by a distance of ten miles from the center of Golden Meadow. Between the two there is no distance greater than a half mile without some business unit. This situation represents maximum development. Most linear hamlets are much smaller.

The intermediate stage between the linear hamlet and the grid city is the T-shaped town, or T-town. When the possibilities of lateral



☐ Church

• Farm Residence

☐ School

◦ Non Farm Residence

△ Business Unit

— Road

DIAGRAMS OF LINEAR HAMLET GROWTH SEQUENCE

extension have been exceeded by a hamlet, the only direction future growth may take is along streets perpendicular to the bayou road. The T-town is actually an incipient grid city, but nevertheless represents an important stage of growth, the transition from linear to grid forms.

Size, function, and location are related to the form in a manner similar to the case of the linear hamlet. The size range in terms of population is approximately 1,000 to 2,500. Functions include more or the business and professional services, and possibly some small industry. The locational factor provides the distinction between two fundamental types of T-towns. The two types may be termed (1) the simple T-town, and (2) the confluence T-town. The first is solely the result of growth along a bayou road. The second is the result of growth at the confluence of roads. In the first case, the development of a street or streets perpendicular to the bayou road is a response to growth. The side streets are not of any great length and may have dead ends. There may be more than one side street and the number is not important. Any town must be considered a T-town as long as no important streets develop which run parallel to the bayou road and intersect the perpendicular streets. When there is a significant growth on the streets running parallel to the bayou road, then the town fits the grid-city category.

In the second case, part of the growth of the town is the result of the confluence of two roads. At important nodal points in the road network of the area secondary roads transect or leave main bayou roads. These roads are primarily part of the road system and not a part of the towns. No matter how small the settlement they may connect to major bayou roads, they are not the same as side streets which are the result

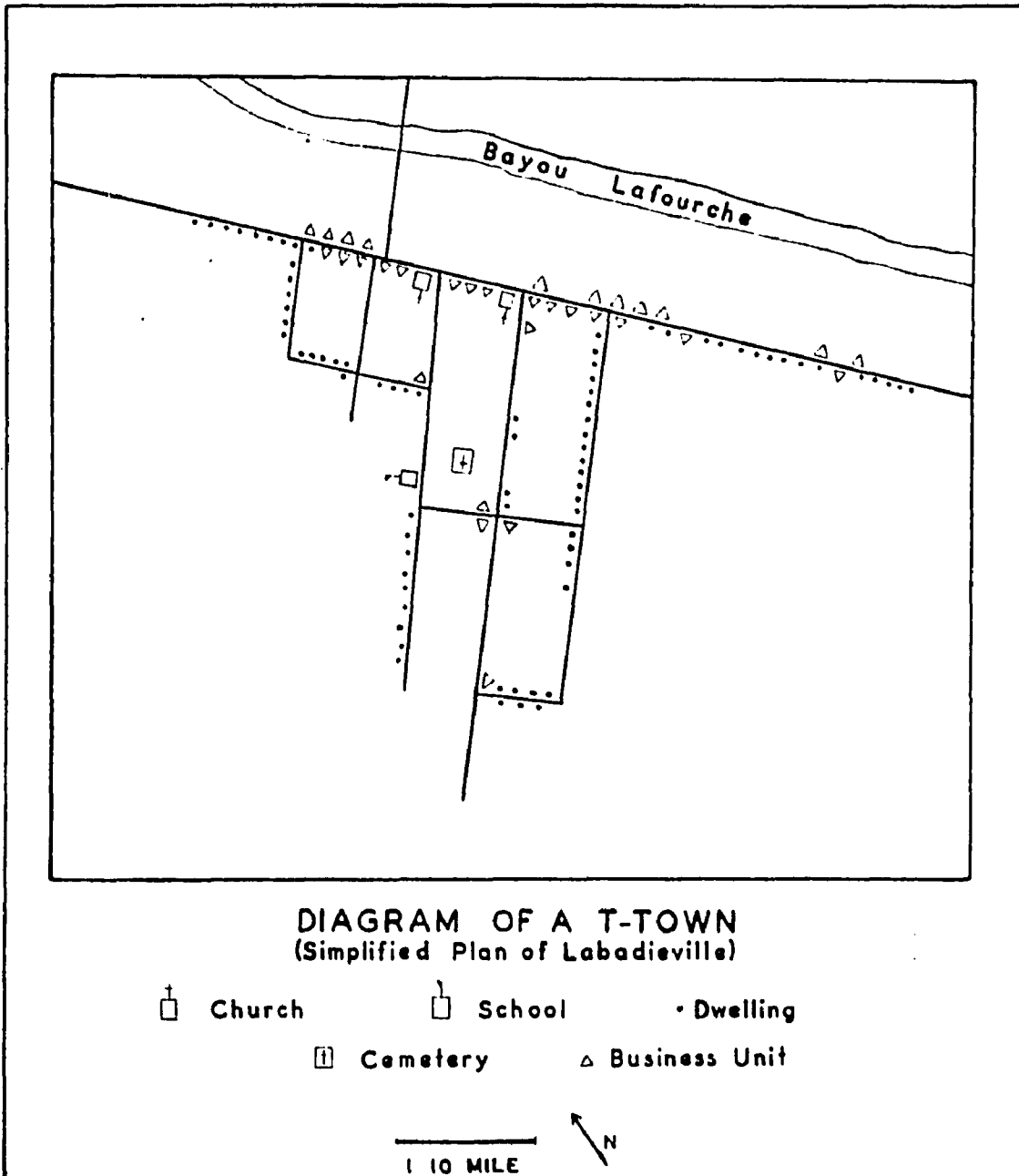
of urban growth. Some may run from bayou front toward marsh or swamp and there come to an end, perhaps with a small settlement. A few are parts of road systems connecting main bayou roads. Any growth along such secondary roads is primarily the result of the road, and, therefore, should properly be called Strassendorf. It is usual that such a development has a younger character than the settlement on the bayou road.

A diagram of a T-town is given in Plate 11. On Bayou Lafourche, Raceland is an example of a confluence situation. The highway from Houma to the Mississippi River at Luling runs through Raceland and accounts for some Strassendorf growth. Luling on the Mississippi is another such town. Along the Mississippi and upper Bayou Lafourche are several examples of the simple T-town.

In general, the size difference between grid cities and T-towns is distinct, for the towns must be significantly large for a grid pattern to predominate. The cities must provide all functions which are not fulfilled by the towns. They are not numerous and most fall within the population range of 2,500 to 10,000. New Orleans and Baton Rouge do not belong to this group because they are of extra-regional importance. Some of the characteristic cities are Houma, Thibodaux, and Donaldsonville.

The locational factor is clearly the dominant one in the growth of these cities. All are located at some nodal position in the system of bayou roads, and the size is proportional to the number of tributary bayou settlements. They are like the confluence T-towns, but only in more advantageous locations. The largest of these cities is Houma, which is located at the convergence of nine bayou settlements. The





five bayou settlements to the south of Houma still have no other town of any size which can be reached before Houma. In earlier times all the bayous of these settlements were navigable for the small boats which were so important. Older inhabitants still recall the several days' journey in a skiff to Houma which was necessary in order to obtain the things that they could not produce or provide for themselves. Thibodaux serves a lengthy segment of Bayou Lafourche on both sides and also Bayou Terrebonne. Donaldsonville lies at the junction of Bayou Lafourche and the Mississippi River.

The many features of urbanization are clear in the map of settlements. The linear hamlets are the most numerous and are purely local in importance. They are the product of their own bayou settlements and most surely will remain so. Next in size, but less numerous, are the T-towns. Those which are not located at confluence sites are just the result of growth of linear hamlets beyond the limits of lateral extension. Those at the confluence of several roads are special cases and are much more likely to become grid cities. The regional grid cities are few and are located in the most strategic points in the regional road system.

There is one urban service which very effectively extends the trade area of urban centers. It is the very important "rolling store," loaded with general merchandise, which daily makes a trip along the bayou roads near the town from which it operates. There is no other settlement pattern better suited for this kind of store. The dwellings are close together and close to the road. The mobile or itinerant merchant is not new to the bayou settlement. The occupation has a long tradition, only the type of transportation has changed. When

settlement was sparse and roads virtually nonexistent, small boats carried the trade. At a later time horse-drawn carts were used. The early merchants were actually peddlers, many of whom were Syrians and Italians who lived in the towns. They would sell to plantation hands and farming people along the bayous. The density of settlement must have been sufficiently high so that the practice was not greatly different from peddling in the towns. Some of the merchants in the towns today owe their businesses to the old cart trade.

### Dispersed Settlement

Certain kinds of dispersed settlement are important exceptions to the general pattern. Although the population living in such settlements is numerically insignificant, the settlements themselves are noteworthy. Two kinds may be distinguished, depending upon the natural environment: (1) the swamp settlements, and (2) the marsh settlements. The primary reason for the differences is to be found in the different conditions which permit the existence of the settlements.

The swamp settlement is the least distinct and the most difficult to characterize, swamp dweller is easily distinguished. The people live by activities other than farming, and in some cases it is difficult to determine just how they make a living. Some of the most frequently cited activities of these people who may term themselves "swampers" are: moss gathering, fishing of various kinds, raising or collecting turtles, collecting cypress logs lost in earlier lumbering activities, and occasional trapping for muskrat and other animals. Formerly the word "swamper" meant especially one engaged in logging work. Now the designation "swamp" indicates the interests of the people more than the

place of habitation. In general, they may be found anywhere peripheral to the large swamps, few live in the interior. Important swamp areas are located in the Atchafalaya Basin, in the basin between Bayou Lafourche and the Mississippi River, and in the lowlands between the Mississippi levees and the terrace in the Florida Parishes, around Lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain. Isolated habitations are less common than small clusters of houses. Individual dwellings are scattered along roads and highways which traverse the big swamps. The small clusters of houses are generally located on small bayous leading to swamps.

The marsh settlement should be considered a different kind of dispersed settlement. The habitat is different and it supports a different economy. Muskrat trapping is the principal activity. Dwellings occur singly and in small clusters of two and three. The sites for the habitations are along bayous and canals, and sometimes lake shores. They are remote from roads and can be reached only by boat. The settlement is sparse but widespread throughout the marsh. The number of people who live the entire year in these places is quite small compared to the number who live in other types of settlement. There is a marked seasonal regime, for most habitations are the temporary dwellings of trappers.

The marsh settlement of the present represents the end product of an evolutionary sequence. The change is all but complete. There is abundant evidence, both material and traditional, that there were more people living in the marshes a few generations ago. The older people who now live on the lower bayous in the compact linear settlements remember the times when they lived in permanent situations which

resemble the marsh settlements of the present.<sup>12</sup> In those times there were more of the small settlements of about six to ten families, such as those of Bayou Gauche and Bayou St. Jean Charles, which existed on isolated coteaux. In 1952 Bayou St. Jean Charles, Pecan Island, and Cheniere au Tigre were the only surviving coteaux settlements. Now roads connect all but Cheniere au Tigre.

The information derived from old native informants makes possible a conjectural reconstruction of former marsh settlement and the events which brought about the change. These people lived in small groups of a few families on small natural-levee ridges or coteaux, scattered throughout the marsh. Interentially, Bayou St. Jean Charles settlement must resemble those early settlements. They were actually incipient bayou settlements, or like their trapper-fisher segments. As long as roads were few and poor, no other kind of settlement was possible in the marshlands. The better roads of the large bayou settlements were remote from most of the marsh. At that time, about the early part of this century, the bayou settlements must have been distinctly agricultural, and lacked the typical trapper-fisher segments toward the lower ends. These segments must have then been the "marsh settlement." The connections and relationships between the "marsh folk" and the farmers must have been limited. Even today the farming people sometimes distinguish themselves from the people "down below,"

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<sup>12</sup>Particular information has been obtained from the following places: Delacroix and Yscloskey in St. Bernard Parish; Barataria in Jefferson Parish; Bayou Gauche in St. Charles Parish, Bayou Boeuf near Lac des Allemands; and Bayous Pointe au Chien and Du Large in Terrebonne Parish. Other evidence consists of the scattered debris of old house sites on natural levees and old beach ridges in the marsh.

often in terms indicating for the latter a lower social position. On the Terrebonne bayous, these people have some admixture of Indian and Negro and are called "Sabines."<sup>13</sup> Those settlements which were on the lower ends of the main bayous on which farmers lived were actually separate entities. There was little to link the two groups. Separate settlements on the smaller levee ridges were more numerous.

In the development of the bayou settlements there was a movement of people inward toward the lower ends of each settlement. The source of this group was the marsh. The roads of the big bayous which contained farming populations extended towards the marsh and either met settlements of marsh folk or attracted settlements of these people. The more-isolated ridges were abandoned for those which had road connections. Another significant factor in this shift of population was the small inboard motor. The introduction of the motor is remembered by some inhabitants as an important event. Those two things, the road and the motor, made it possible for the marsh dwellers to move closer to the big bayou settlements and to obtain the benefits of such an association while at the same time allowing them to go some distance to and from trapping and fishing areas. Then there was no longer any factor which would require isolation and the dispersed settlement of the marsh dwellers.

There are no isolated permanent marsh settlements today, with the exception of Cheniere au Tigre. The principal marsh settlement of the present consists of the "trappers' shacks" which are used only during

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<sup>13</sup>Parenton, V. J. and Pellegrin, R. J., "The Sabines," Social Forces, XXIX (1950), 148-154.

the trapping season. During the off-season the trapper lives in a permanent dwelling in a bayou settlement. A transitional stage between the dispersed marsh settlement and the bayou settlement is represented by the camp boats. A few of these are taken to the marshes for the winter, but for most of the year they remain tied up near some bayou settlement.

## Chapter IV

### The Cultural Landscapes

#### Introduction

Three types of cultural landscapes are readily distinguished among the bayou settlements. They are: (1) the plantation landscape, (2) the small farm landscape, and (3) the trapper-fisher-swamper landscape. In general they have characteristic locations within any one bayou settlement. The sequence from upstream in the downstream direction is: plantation, small farm, and trapper-fisher-swamper settlement. These positions correspond to the natural qualities of the land along the bayou for which the various activities are best suited. A typical case is Bayou du Large (Pl. 12).

In the upper portions of a typical bayou settlement, the plantation occupies a dominant or important position. The levees are wider, and there is more arable land than at any other location downstream. The present arrangement of landscape types has come about as a result of a gradual evolution. Plantations were first established along the Mississippi River. As the Mississippi provided the best conditions for them, and as there was much land to be filled, it was some time before the plantations spread to adjacent bayous. The bayous were first settled by small farmers. Gradually, as the Mississippi lands became filled by the plantations, planters began to encroach upon the lands of the small farmers. This process was most significant following 1803 when the sale of Louisiana to the United States allowed the influx of American planters from the Atlantic South. As a result the plantations have become interspersed with the small farms. The



distinction between the two is not always clear. Within the last few decades many small holdings have been incorporated in the plantations and the dwellings and associated buildings remain as tenant units. In some cases the house and land in the front are retained and only the agricultural lands in the back are sold to plantations. Thus, there is not always an observable difference between plantation and other kinds of occupance. The appearance is that of the original function. This process is still going on, and along with it has begun a process of amalgamation whereby large corporations are acquiring the plantations which were formerly operated independently. There is little in the landscape which gives evidence of this fact. Individual plantations are run by resident managers who occupy dwellings of former owners. Eventually the stage will be reached when the old buildings will be replaced by new ones designed and situated to suit the new system of plantation agriculture. Some cases indicate a return to the old arrangement of a compact nucleus consisting of a manager's house, workers' quarters, and outbuildings.

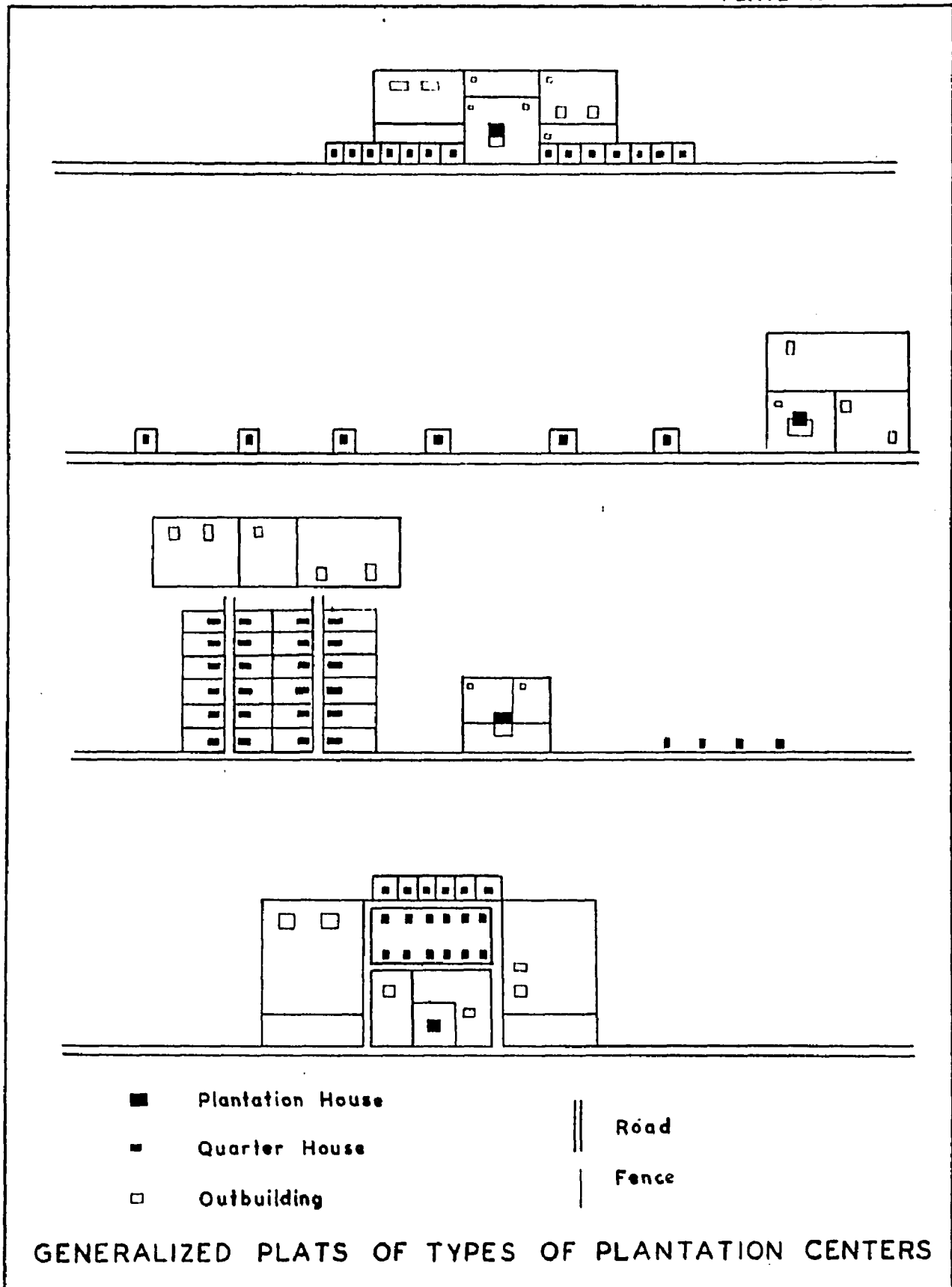
The middle portions of the bayous are characteristically occupied by small farmers. This group is much more numerous than the other two, and comprises by far the largest part of the bayou settlement. Above the farmers on the bayou are the plantations, but farm units are frequently mixed among them. Toward the lower ends of bayou settlements, farming populations give way to trapping and fishing people. The progressive southward diminution of the natural levees decreases the amount of arable land, so that at some place along the line of settlement there is no longer enough land to support an agricultural economy. At that place begins the settlement of fishermen and trappers.

The trapping-fishing segment on the lower ends of bayou settlements is the result of a choice, rather than an expedient forced by the natural qualities of the land. The occurrence of that kind of settlement is not always restricted to land that is unsuited for any other use. In some cases there is land around the settlements which is suitable for the grazing of livestock. If animals are pastured in such places, they usually belong to some farmer farther up the bayou. Only in extreme cases is land for a garden lacking, yet gardens are not common among these folk. Their choice is fishing and trapping, and they live in the best place for that kind of activity. The length of these segments is generally much less than the length of the farm segments. The line of demarcation between the two kinds of landscapes is not always sharp, for dwellings of the two kinds are interspersed in a transition zone.

#### Morphology of the Plantation Landscape

The plantation landscape is conspicuous for its dominant "big house," the dwelling of the owner or manager, its organized cluster of "quarter houses," the dwellings of the laborers, and groups of large barns and sheds. All units are generally closely spaced in an orderly fashion. Outbuildings are comparatively few and are located near the plantation center. Some of the more common types of organization are given in the generalized plats in Plate 13.

The "big houses" may be of three kinds; modern, pillared mansion, or the regional folk type. These differences are due to both economic and cultural controls. The mansion with white pillars is the younger of the latter two and its cultural connections are extra-regional.



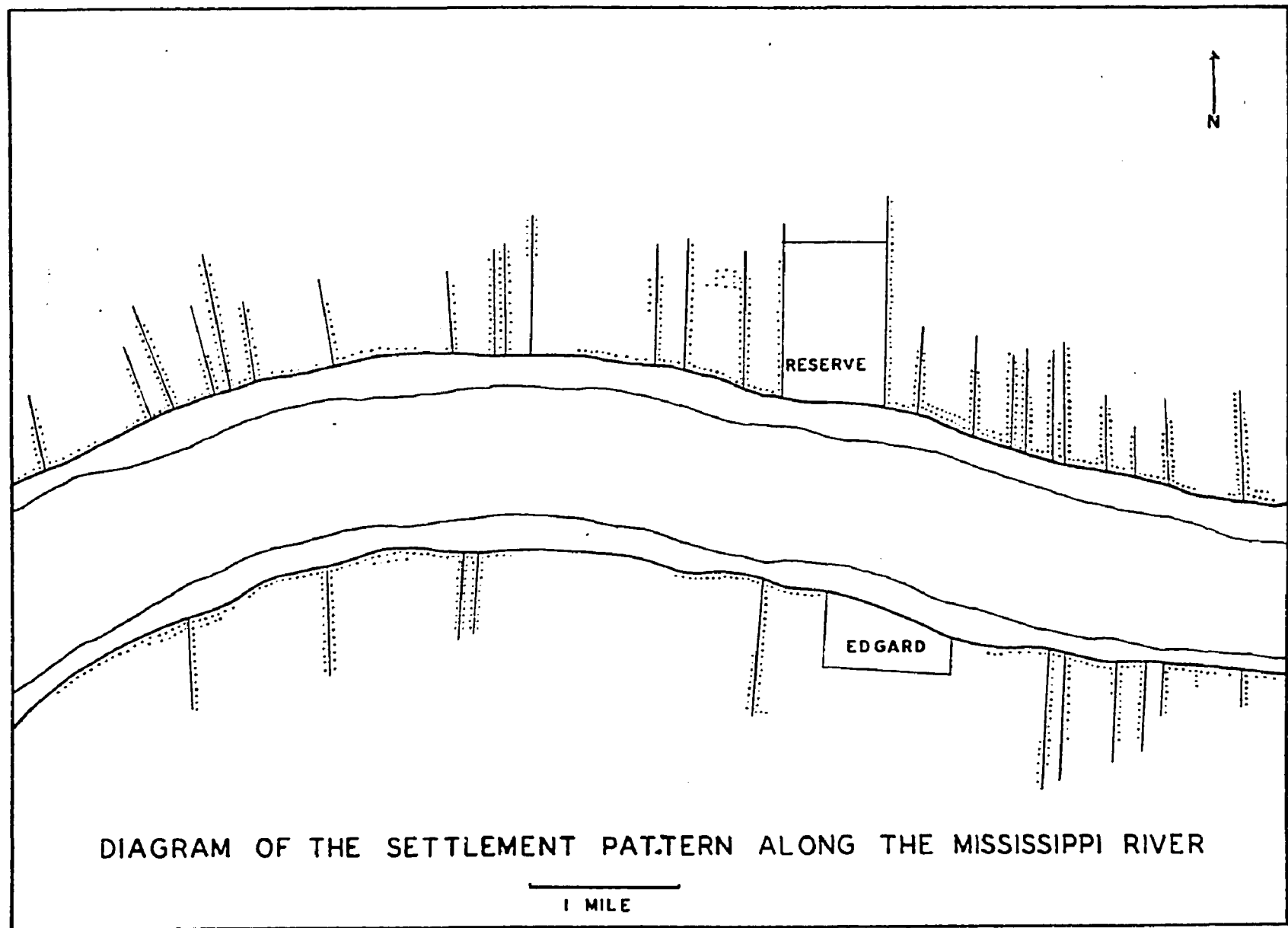
Such houses were built during the Neo-Classical Period of architecture in the South by Anglo-Americans. Comparatively few plantation houses are of this type, in general, only those of the very largest plantations at the time of building.<sup>1</sup> The regional folk dwelling, which will be termed "Creole," is much more common. It differs mainly in size and refinement from the folk dwelling of the petit habitant.

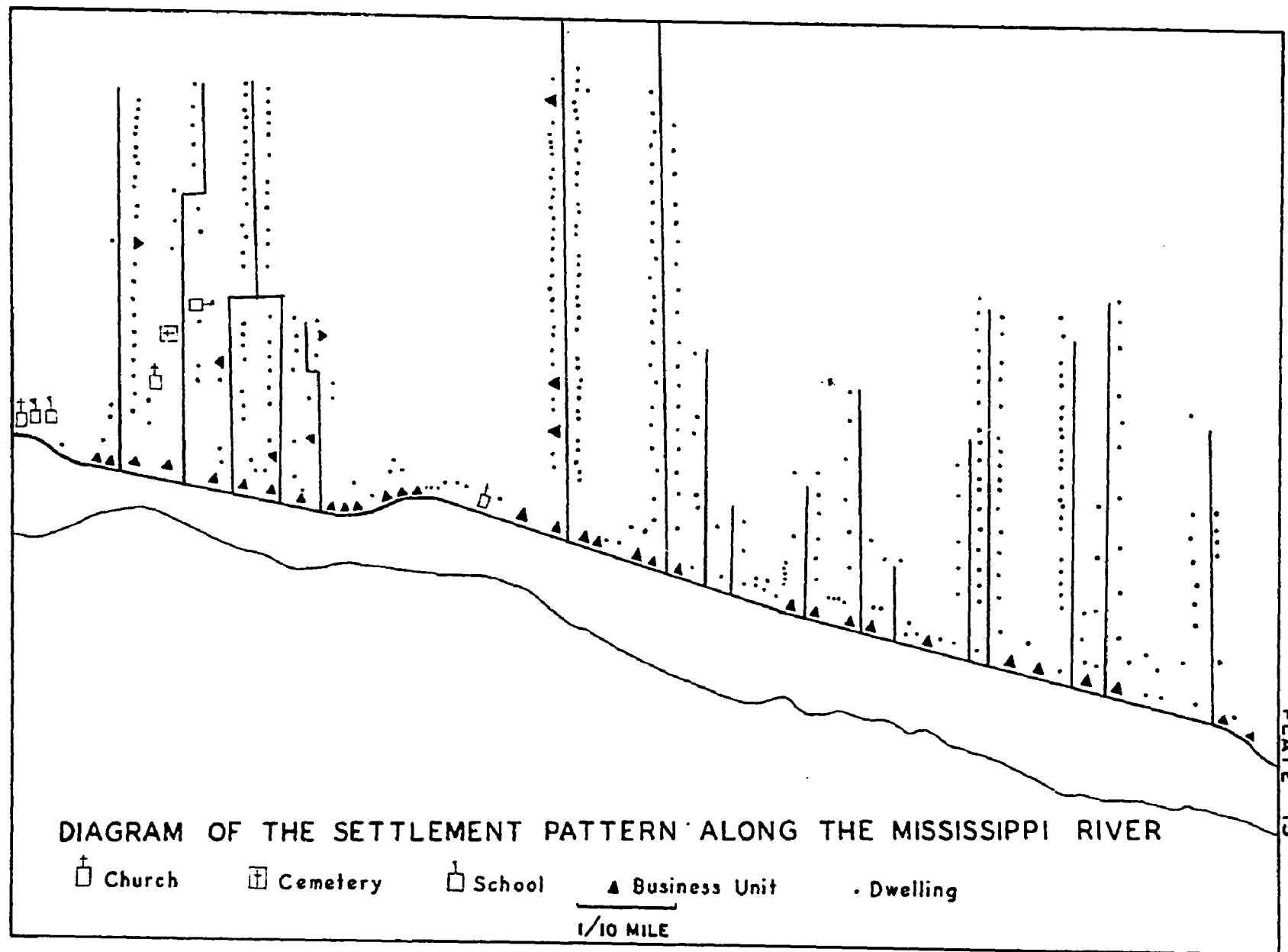
The "quarter houses" are generally regional folk types. On any one plantation they may be all of one type, or a mixture of types. They may be arranged in blocks or segments of one type depending upon the time of construction. If they were built as quarter houses, they generally display that appearance. However, miscellaneous dwellings may be acquired by an expanding plantation, and those will not seem to be a part of the pattern.

The plantation landscape is more characteristic of the Mississippi rather than of the bayous. The Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is preëminently "plantation country." Plates 14 and 15 illustrate the essential morphological qualities of a part of this section. Some changes have occurred in the plantation landscape as a result of mechanization and centralization by corporate enterprises. A comparatively small number of very large sugar-refining centers have replaced the smaller sugar mills of independent planters which were once numerous. A few tall, square smokestacks of brick are some of the reminders of the old pattern. The modern refineries, with their tall stacks, are the most imposing structures of the present landscape.

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<sup>1</sup>This type of dwelling lies outside the scope of this study. An excellent treatment of them may be found in Joseph F. Smith, White Pillars (William Helburn, Inc., New York, 1941).





Mechanization has reduced the need for outbuildings. Equipment sheds have replaced the large barns for mules which were a part of every plantation. Distinctive carts and wagons of steel construction have replaced the large wooden carts in which the cane was hauled. Steel cranes with motor-driven winches, which are used to load the carts, are very numerous along the margins of cane fields.

### Morphology of the Farm Landscape

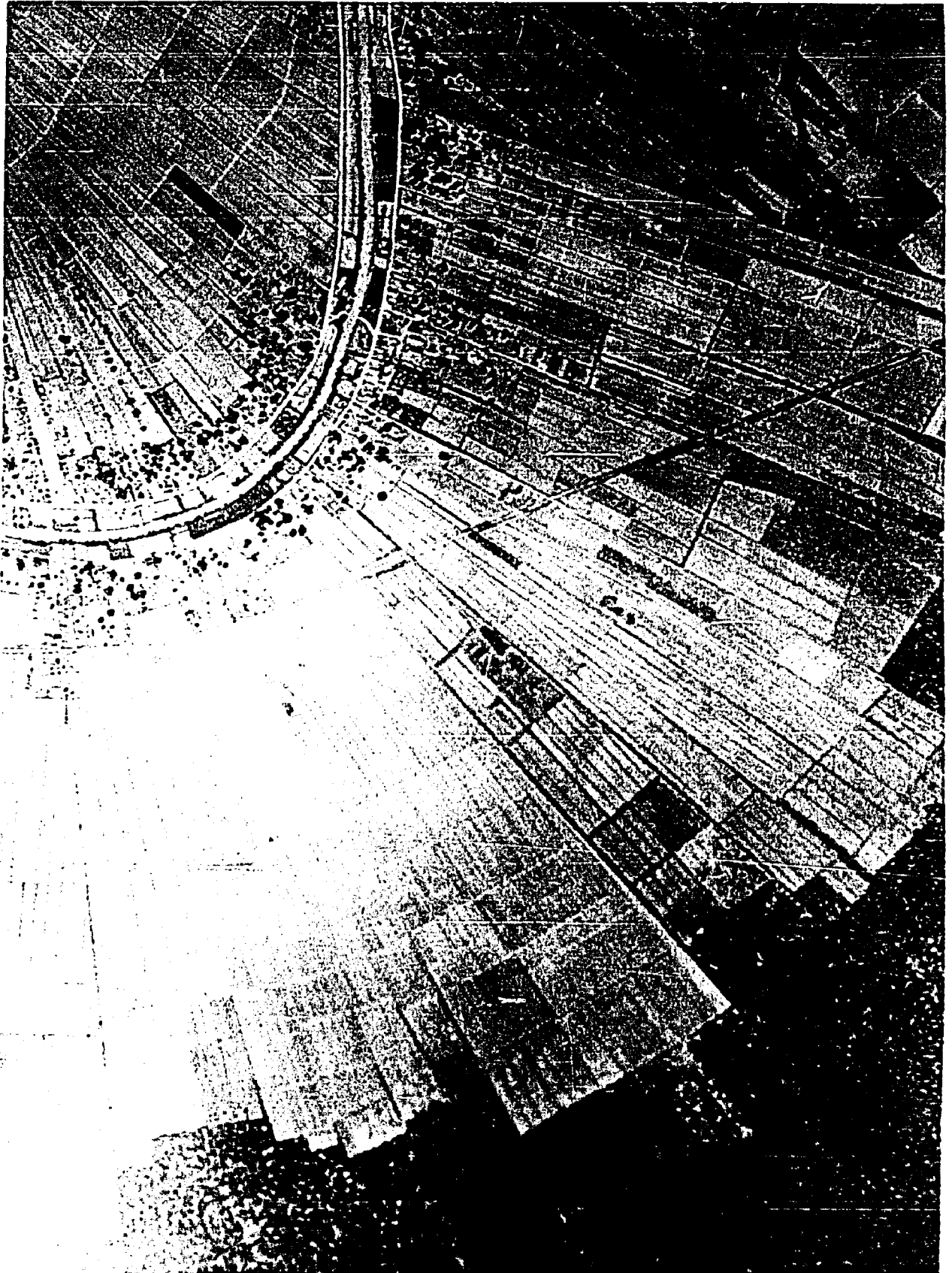
Many features other than the arrangement of dwellings give the farm landscape its distinctive appearance. In a consideration of its morphology the most important facts are the frequency and spacing of the farm units. For these purposes it is valid to consider all farmsteads as essentially identical in general characteristics. A term which is often used to describe the outstanding qualities of these farms is "ribbon farm." The dwelling with its outbuildings and cultivated fields occupies a narrow strip of land whose length is many times its width, hence the term. The fenced front of a farmstead may frequently represent the entire width of cultivated land for that farm. Dwellings are located near the "front," usually within about fifty or sixty feet of the road which parallels the bayou. Close behind, and sometimes a little to the side, are located the outbuildings and small enclosures for livestock. Then, cultivated fields extend from the pens and buildings toward the "back" as far as possible. Property lines usually extend toward backswamp or marsh for twenty or forty arpents, but this is most often enough to include all land that is suitable for cultivation. Thus, the line which delimits the extent of cultivated land along bayou settlements is not a property

line, but a contour line which delimits land whose natural qualities are unsuited for cultivation (Pl. 16).

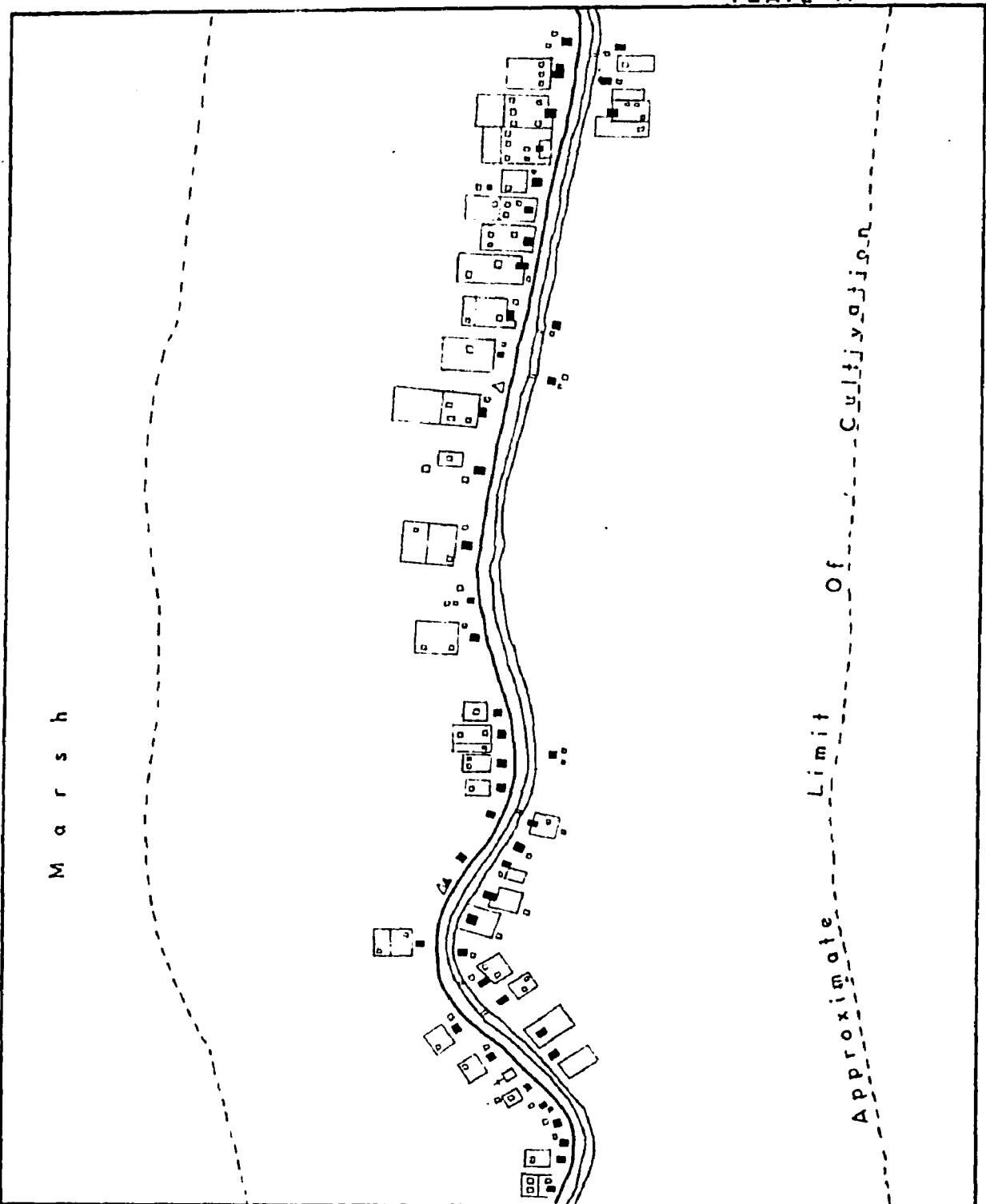
In a generalized and most typical arrangement every dwelling would represent a single "ribbon farm," but in many cases the structure is much more complex and such a representation is inadequate. The farm landscape is interspersed with the dwellings of people who are not farmers, and farms that are no longer functional. In such cases the "front" only may be in the possession of the occupant of the dwelling, and the cultivated lands which continue as an uninterrupted belt behind may belong to an adjacent farmer, or even a plantation. The non-farmers derive a livelihood from small businesses scattered along the bayou or in adjacent urban centers. Some are school teachers; others are workers in sugar refineries, small industries, or public services. Some are aged people supported by pensions or their children. Almost as many kinds of occupations may be found in these sections as might be found in the small urban centers. The fact of such diversity makes it impossible to treat the farm landscape as if it were composed entirely of farm units. Some examples of typical arrangements are given in Plates 17 and 18.

The density and complexity of the arrangement of dwellings and business establishments in any farmstead landscape are directly proportional to the extent of growth of the settlement. The amount of growth can not always be related to the age of any settlement. Time and the actual numerical increase in population are the only factors and they can not be equated directly with the density of dwellings. The factors which control the dwelling density are less tangible; probably an important one is prosperity and its many





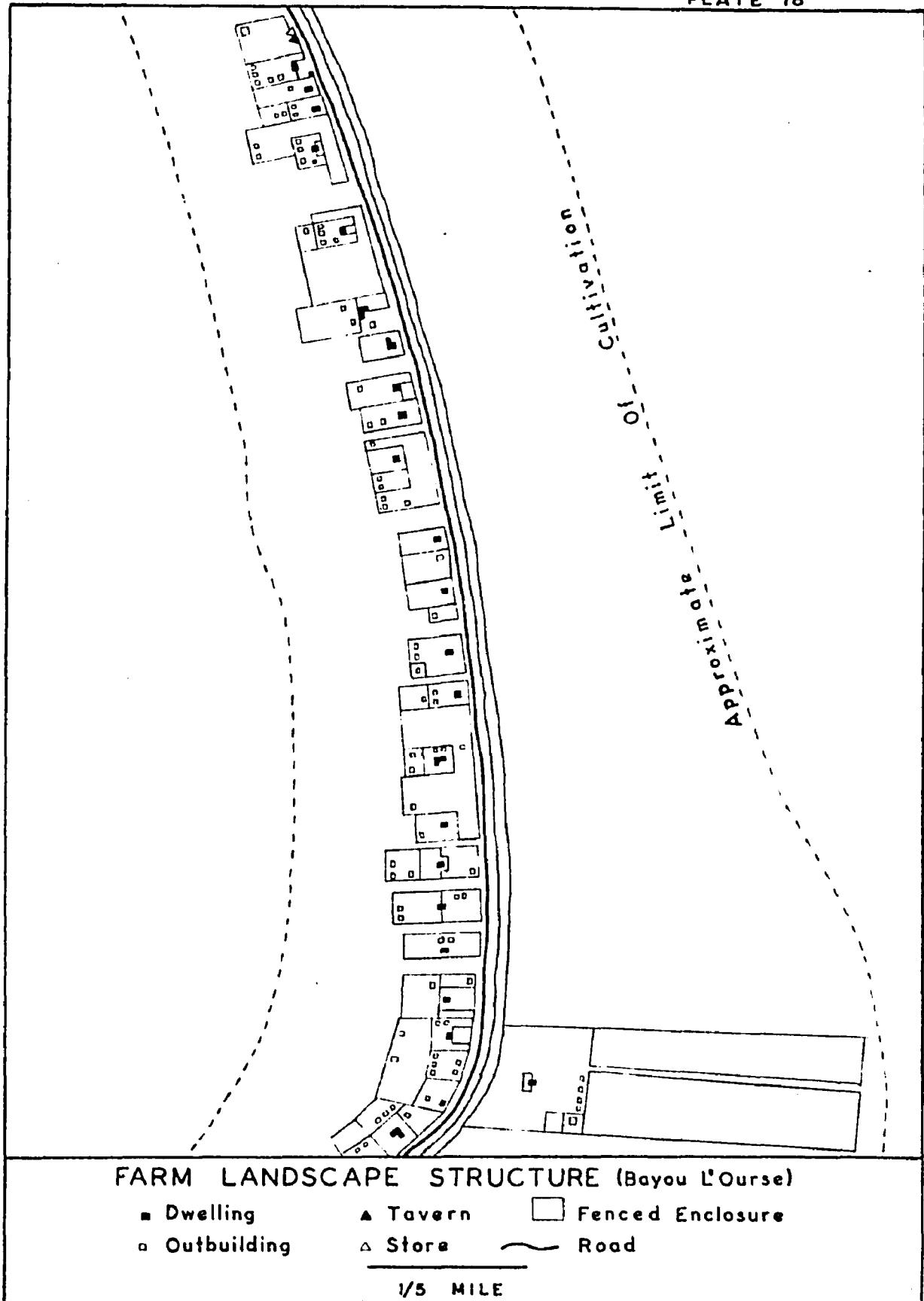
Aerial Photograph of a Farm Landscape



FARM LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE (Bayou Pointe Au Chien)

- |            |               |                    |
|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| ■ Dwelling | □ Outbuilding | ▭ Fenced Enclosure |
| ⊕ Church   | △ Store       | ▲ Tavern           |
|            |               | ~ Road             |

1/5 MILE



ramifications. See Plates 19 and 20 for examples of farm landscapes.

It is possible to distinguish a sequential development or evolution of complexity in the settlements of today. Cases may be found which represent all stages of growth from the most simple to the most complex. Although these different examples may be of the same age, there are great relative differences in the amount of growth. The more simple patterns may be considered to represent earlier stages of growth of the now-more-complex patterns.

Spacing of buildings varies from conditions where there is enough room for a pasture or garden between one house and the next to conditions of extreme crowding. In some places the density becomes so great that there is no longer space along the front of the bayou for a lateral development and dwellings are placed one behind the other, sometimes to a depth of three houses. The orientation of such dwellings may be toward the road or toward a driveway or path which is perpendicular to the road and bayou. The highest development or those tendencies which are seen in the evolution of a bayou settlement is reached at places on Bayou Lafourche. The densely settled portion of the bayou extends for about eighty-five miles, and within this distance there are approximately 3,160 dwellings on the right bank, outside of the distinct urban centers. Allowing for the towns and about thirty feet per house, the average spacing for the eighty-five miles would be one dwelling every one hundred feet.

#### Morphology of the Trapper-Fisher-Swamper Landscape

Bayous that reach toward the sea are generally wider in the downstream portions. Many of those along which important settlement

exists are dredged, and especially those which are parts of canal systems. The settlements along such bayou segments and along bayous and lakes near or in marsh or swamp are inhabited by trappers, fishermen, and those who term themselves "swampers." These comprise the third distinctive type of landscape. The contrasting natural environment of marsh and swamp tend to obscure the similarities between the trapper--fisher and swamper landscapes. The economic activities differ somewhat depending on the site, but the difference in material culture does not correspond accordingly. In either case the cultural elements are few, house types and other forms are essentially the same, and the pattern is simple.

The bayou is a much more conspicuous feature and everything seems to crowd along its side. The houses are smaller, more closely spaced, and much closer to the bayou than in the other landscapes. Little land is needed other than that on which the house rests. Seldom do these folk even cultivate a small vegetable garden. Outbuildings are limited to an outhouse, a small shed, and occasionally a garage. Fenced enclosures are absent or few. At the waterside there are piers, boats, and related equipment.

The economic activities vary with the seasons as well as with location. Those settlements near the marsh depend upon trapping of muskrat during the winter, crab fishing during the summer, shrimp fishing mainly during autumn and spring. Oysters are caught during the year, but especially in the late summer and fall. Salt-water fishing is not so important, but nothing which can be taken from the water is neglected. Occasionally an alligator skin is added to the harvest. A clear distinction between the economic activities of a marsh settlement

and those of a swamp settlement does not exist, yet there is a difference. It is a matter of degree rather than kind. The swamp-dweller may engage in many of the same activities; the number will depend upon the nearness of the marshes and the boats he may own. The swamp offers additional activities; moss-gathering, fresh-water fishing, searching for sunken cypress logs, gathering and raising of turtles, and trapping for fur-bearing animals other than muskrats. Muskrat trapping is so rewarding that the swamper may leave his home to live in a temporary dwelling in the marsh during the season.

The trapper-fisher-swamper landscape has two settlement forms: the line village and the isolated dwelling. The villages of swamp and marsh comprise by far the greater part of the habitations. Each of them has associated isolated dwellings which are due to different causes. Thus, a classification of the settlement types of this landscape based on form and function would yield four kinds: (1) the isolated temporary trapper's camp, (2) the isolated swamper's camp, (3) the marsh village, and (4) the swamp village.

The isolated temporary trapper's camp is located in the trapping marshes and is used only during the trapping season. During most of the year the trapper lives in a village. These camps are not all remote; some are grouped in clusters of two or three. Individual camps may be miles distant from others, but the "gas boat" makes them easily accessible. Before the advent of the gasoline engine these camps were very remote. The dwelling is constructed with some care, as it is used for years and especially as it is used during the cold season. The trapper generally takes his family with him and all help in preparing the pelts. The camp unit is a very simple affair which seldom consists of more than the

dwelling, a rack for drying pelts, and a small boat pier.

An important landscape feature is the trainasse or ditch. The trapper in making his "routine" or circuit of traps must travel over the difficult marsh surface. Depending upon the kind of surface it is accomplished either by walking or boating or a combination of both methods. If a pirogue is taken, it may not be possible to use it for the entire circuit and it is dragged from one pond or lake to another. In time a path is worn where the boat has been dragged which is called a trainasse (to drag). This is the original use of the term, and its use extends back to the earliest trapping days when heavier dugout pirogues were used. A pirogue cannot be poled or paddled through a genuine trainasse for it is too shallow. The boat is kept only partially afloat so that the trapper has less weight to pull. The trainasse is still used, but the modern tendency is to make it deep enough to float the pirogue, in which case it is called a "ditch." The ditch has almost replaced the trainasse in the regular trapping procedure, so the term is seldom used. Fur companies and the Department of Conservation are largely responsible for this change for they have the means and equipment to make the ditches. A trapper can now make his circuit of traps in a soft marsh without having to drag his pirogue for any great distance. Thus the trapping activity has added an extensive system of trainasses, ditches, and canals to the marsh. These, with the camps, and the drilling rigs of oil companies comprise most of the cultural aspects of the marsh landscape.

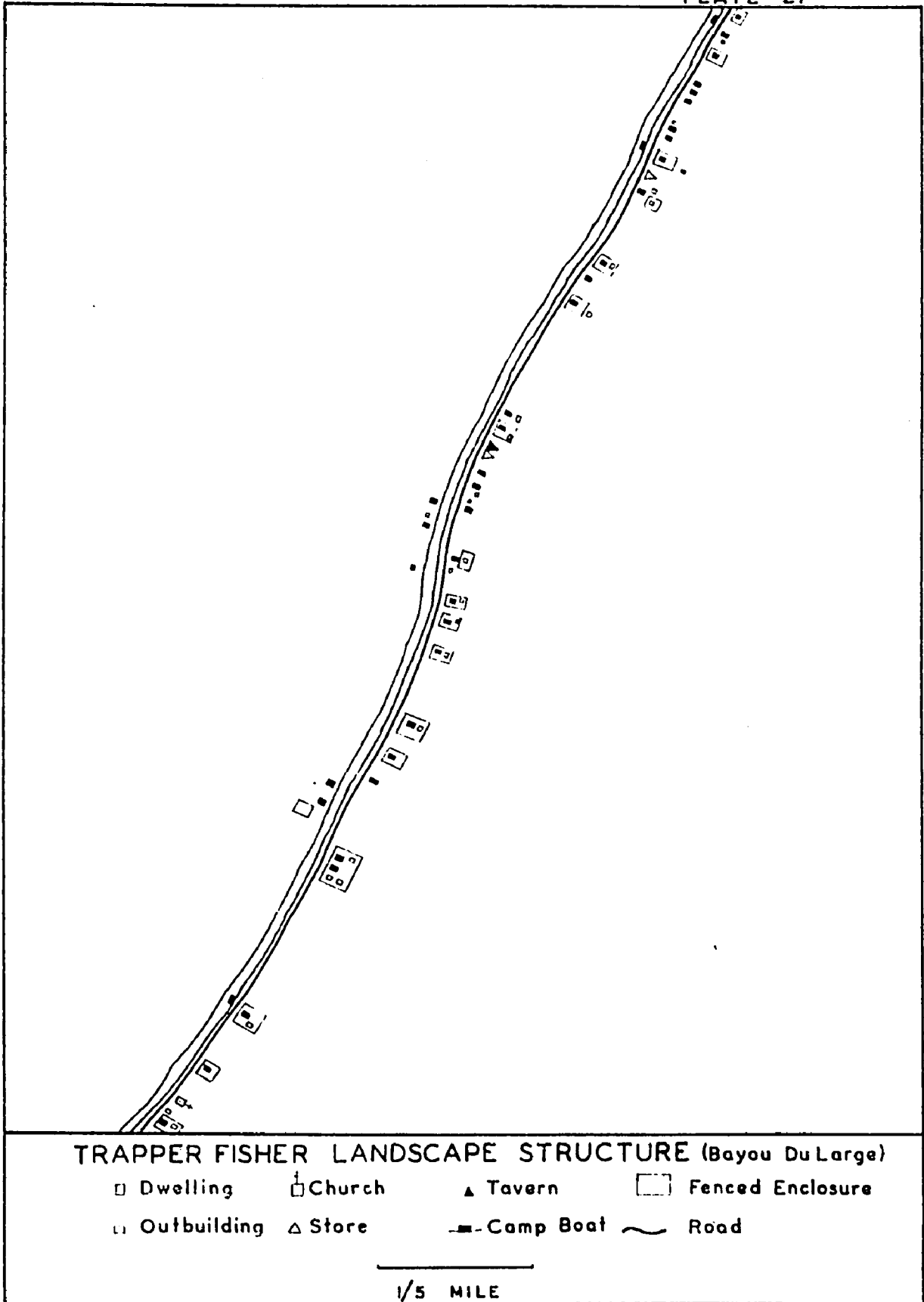
The isolated swamper's camp has an entirely different origin and function. It is a permanent dwelling used the year round. The economic activities of the swamper are identical to those of his kind

who live in the villages. From the economic standpoint, he can do no more, nor live any better than those in the village, except that he may not have to own land or pay rent. Some may simply seek seclusion, which is not the case of the trapper who must live as he does to make a living. The isolated swamper's dwelling is little different from those in the villages; it is generally a "camp" type.

The marsh village (trapper-fisher village) may be so designated though the particular site of all these villages is a natural levee within the general location of the marsh. Live oak trees are conspicuous along the village road. Other vegetation of the natural levee may obscure the marsh from view, but the village has an aspect which indicates that its main economic associations are with the marsh and salt water bodies within and adjacent to the marsh. The kinds of boats and equipment along the bayouside indicate these associations to some extent. In general the dwellings are smaller and more frequently painted than those of the swamper village. The proportion of the "camp" type dwelling is greater. There are fewer fences and outbuildings. Seldom is any kind of livestock kept and the principal function of a fence is to keep animals out. The structure of a typical village is shown in Plate 21. Examples of this type of settlement are Bayou Gauche (Pl. 22) and Bayou Terre aux Boeufs (Pl. 23).

The swamp village is different mainly according to the different economic opportunities offered by the swamp. The particular site of this type of village is again the natural levee, but it is the general location which is important. There is a slight difference in house types between the swamp village and the marsh village. The former has a larger proportion of shotgun houses, fewer camps, and occasionally





a Creole house, which is rare in a marsh village. The appearance is somewhat different. In general there are more outbuildings and more fenced enclosures, for more livestock is kept. There are often chicken roosts, small sheds which serve as barns, and boxes for raising turtles. Along the bayouside are pens for hogs, fences on which moss is hung to dry, piles of retting moss, boxes containing the cured moss, lathboxes for keeping turtles alive, and boats that differ somewhat in type from those of the marsh settlements. Bayou L'Ours is a good example of such a settlement.

Near any group of fishermen or trappers in or adjacent to the marshes there are usually a number of "camp boats." These are more commonly associated with the trapping economy, which involves a definite seasonal pattern of movement. During the spring and summer months the camp boats gather at the lower extremities of the permanent settlements where they have access to roads. Small poches, or pockets, are dug into the stream bank where the boats are moored for several months. During this time the people are engaged in fishing or almost any type of work that can be had to sustain them until the trapping season opens. When that time comes, the camp boats are taken out into the marsh. There the pattern changes to a widely dispersed distribution as each family leases a tract of land for trapping rights. They remain in the marsh throughout the season and then return to some settlement along a road. It is not unusual for them to choose a different place from year to year, or to change location during the off-season if they are not able to sustain themselves in the place they have chosen. This pattern seems to be a phase in the transition between complete permanency of settlement along roads and the dispersed habitations of the marsh,

for the practice is rapidly declining in favor of a more permanent settlement along a bayou road. This is evident from the fact that often camp boats are pulled up on the bank where they become fixed dwellings. To satisfy the requirements of the trapping occupation, camps are built on the trapping lands. The pattern of movement has not changed greatly, but the mode of occupance has.

## Chapter V

### Dwellings

#### Introduction

Of all the categories of cultural elements none is both so obvious and distinctive as that of dwellings. There are several reasons for this. Size and prominence of location alone are enough to bring the house into early recognition. From the ethnographic standpoint other reasons are more important. The dwelling is the most outstanding cultural form. Usually greater care is taken in constructing a house than anything else. It is likely to possess more detail than any other structure and therefore permit greater variety. Changes in one type are gradual, and introductions of new types do not spread as rapidly as might be the case with innovations in other elements. A house is generally built for long use, and often it cannot be changed even though the owner might desire a more "modern" style. Thus, a type of house which is considered outmoded may be thereby projected into a time or period when some other local concept of house style prevails. This is true to such an extent that the most distinctive house type of French Louisiana, the Creole house, would now be extinct if owners could build new houses.

The different types of dwellings within the region are obvious, but any particular type is difficult to define. A definition which included considerations of form, size, floor plan, materials, and the many details of construction and ornamentation may not fully characterize a type. Particular examples of houses may have many variations on the details established for a type, but still belong to that type.

Classification is no serious problem after a familiarity with the region and its houses has been acquired.

The pioneer study of Louisiana folk dwellings by Kniffen<sup>1</sup> established a number of fundamental types, and their regional and cultural associations. Those types which have associations with, or occur within, French Louisiana were identified as : (1) the built-in porch type, (2) the shotgun type, (3) the bungalow type, (4) the trapper type, and (5) the oysterman type. With a few changes in terminology and grouping, these types constitute the basis for the present study. The "built-in porch" type will be termed the "Creole house," and the trapper and oysterman types will be called collectively "camps." The sequence of presentation or treatment will be chronological in so far as it is possible. The order of presentation does not represent the order of appearance of types, nor each type with its subsequent evolutionary developments will be followed through to the present. The types of houses and order of treatment will be as follows: (1) camps, (2) shotgun, (3) Creole, (4) bungalow, and (5) miscellaneous types.

#### Indian Dwellings

The dwellings of the Indians deserve some examination in this connection as there is a suggestion that native dwellings or building techniques had some influence on pioneer European dwellings. The connections cannot be proven with absolute certainty, but probably the influence was there. Although the European settlers would soon have

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<sup>1</sup>Kniffen, Fred B., "Louisiana House Types," Annals Assoc. Amer. Geogrs., XXIV (1936), 179-193.

developed a satisfactory answer for the need of a temporary dwelling in the new environment without borrowing anything from the Indians, the fact that the Indians had dwellings constructed of local materials must have offered some suggestions. Some of the temporary structures built by the pioneer French resembled Indian construction, but wattle-daub construction was still being used in parts of France.

One of the earliest observations of Indian dwellings is made in a document of an exploration along the Mobile River in 1701.<sup>2</sup> The authorship of the document is somewhat in question, either Lavasseur or Sauvolle, acting commandant of Ft. Louis in the absence of Iberville. The explorer says:

"On St. John's Day, I passed a large cape or steep shore on the left side of the river of the Mauvilla. I gave it the name of St. John on account of the feast day. From there we went to rest in a village of the nation of the Mauvilla, called Iagame minco, which means high land. There are seventeen huts built in the style of villages in Picardy, that is, with earthen walls, and covered with palm leaves with a network of split canes placed upon them to prevent the wind from blowing off the palm leaves."

The work of Swanton on the Indians of this region contains the most complete compilation of early narratives which describe Indian dwellings.<sup>3</sup> These accounts occur at contact time or shortly thereafter, and must represent pre-Columbian conditions. The salient constructional features of the Indian dwellings are a framework of poles with walls of wattle-daub covered with grass or palmetto, or left bare, and a roof of

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<sup>2</sup>de Villers, Marc, "Documents Concerning the History of the Indians of the Eastern Region of Louisiana," Journal de la Societe des Americanistes de Paris, XIV (1922), 127-140. Translated by George C. H. Kernion, La. Hist. Quart., VIII (1925), 28-40, *ret. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>3</sup>Swanton, *op. cit.*, pp. 259 (Tensas), 275 (Bayougoula), 283 (Acolapissa), 300 (Chawasha), 315 (Tunica), 328 (Coroa), 345 (Chitimacha).

palmetto thatch alone or covered with split-cane mats. Walls of wattle-daub were about two feet thick and had only one opening, a door. Some dwellings had smoke holes. In the Mississippi Valley or northern Louisiana, the Yazoo Valley, and adjacent parts of Arkansas, round or dome-like forms were dominant. The Natchez and tribes to the south generally built square or rectangular dwellings. Along the coast mud daubing was not used. Houses were covered with palmetto fronds, as in the case of the Chitimacha.

The Natchez Indians must have captured the greatest interest of the early chroniclers, for ethnographical data are much more numerous and more complete for those people. They seemed to have quite generally impressed the early French, at least more than the other tribes. The most complete account of their dwellings is that of Du Pratz.

"These huts are each a perfect square; none of them are less than fifteen feet square, and some of them are more than thirty feet in each of their fronts. They erect these huts in the following manner: they bring from the woods several young walnut-trees, about four inches in diameter, and thirteen or twenty feet high; they plant the strongest of these in the four corners, and the others fifteen inches from each other in straight lines, for the sides of the building; a pole is then laid horizontally along the sides in the inside, and all the poles are strongly fastened to it by split canes. Then the four corner poles are bent inwards till they all meet in the centre, where they are strongly fastened together; the side-poles are then bent in the same direction, and bound down to the others; after which they make a mortar of mud mixed with Spanish beard, with which they fill up all the chinks, leaving no opening but the door, and the mud they cover both outside and inside with mats made of the splits of cane. The roof is thatched with turf and straw intermixed, and over all is laid a mat of canes, which is fastened to the tops of the walls by the creeping plant. These huts will last twenty years without any repairs."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Du Pratz, op. cit., p. 341.

Changes which took place in the Indian dwellings following the arrival of the Europeans were only part of a general deculturation. The transition was accompanied by dwelling forms that showed the deterioration of the Indian methods and somewhat less than complete adoption of European forms and methods. The direction of transition could not have always been toward the European. Certain forms appeared during this period which are suggestive of present dwelling types and must be considered in the succession.

The Choctaw who moved to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain after the arrival of the Europeans were more successful in survival than many Louisiana tribes. The transition in Choctaw dwellings is fairly well recorded, and the succession is instructive as to what might have been a general trend. An 18th century report describes dwellings with walls of posts, secured with vines, filled with mud, with roofs of cypress or pine bark. Another about 1770 describes circular dwellings of clay mixed with grass, and conical thatch roofs. By the 19th century some Choctaw were living in houses of logs.<sup>4</sup> The early dwellings of the Choctaw north of Lake Pontchartrain were constructed of saplings with sides and top covered with palmetto. The form was rectangular; circular structures must have been council houses.<sup>5</sup> Bushnell does not mention wattle-daub construction.

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<sup>4</sup>Swanton, J. R., "Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians," Bur. Amer. Ethn. Bull. 103 (1931), 1-282, ref. cit. pp. 40-48.

<sup>5</sup>Bushnell, D. I., "The Choctaw of St. Tammany," La. Hist. Quart., I (1917), 11-20, ref. cit. p. 14.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Choctaw of Bayou Lacombe, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana," Bur. Amer. Ethn. Bull. 48 (1909), 1-37, ref. cit. p. 7.



Although the native habitation, either palmetto or wattle-daub, was generally replaced by other structures at an early date, palmetto houses were used well into the 19th century. This later type is illustrated in Plate 24, a palmetto house near Mandeville in 1897. It may not be a direct descendant of the primitive dwelling and like it in all respects, but the fact that that kind of construction persisted until such a late time is important. If wattle-daub construction was first, palmetto construction might be transitional.

The palmetto house of the Choctaw was also replaced by a structure of wood which resembled it in many ways (Pl. 25).<sup>6</sup> The form of this type of dwelling was like that of the palmetto house, rectangular with the ridge pole running from front to back. The frame was covered with riven boards somewhat larger than a shingle. According to Bushnell, there is some significance in the manner in which the boards are attached to the sides of the dwelling. The arrangement is like that of palmetto fronds in the palmetto house. This sequence of habitations for the Choctaw includes some important nodal types of dwellings for French Louisiana.

#### Temporary Buildings

In the sequence of dwellings or structures built for shelter by the Europeans, temporary dwellings came first. Indian dwellings were undoubtedly important. When permanent houses were being built, some French lived among the Indians. When supplies ran low in the early days of settlement some went to live with the Indians. Those

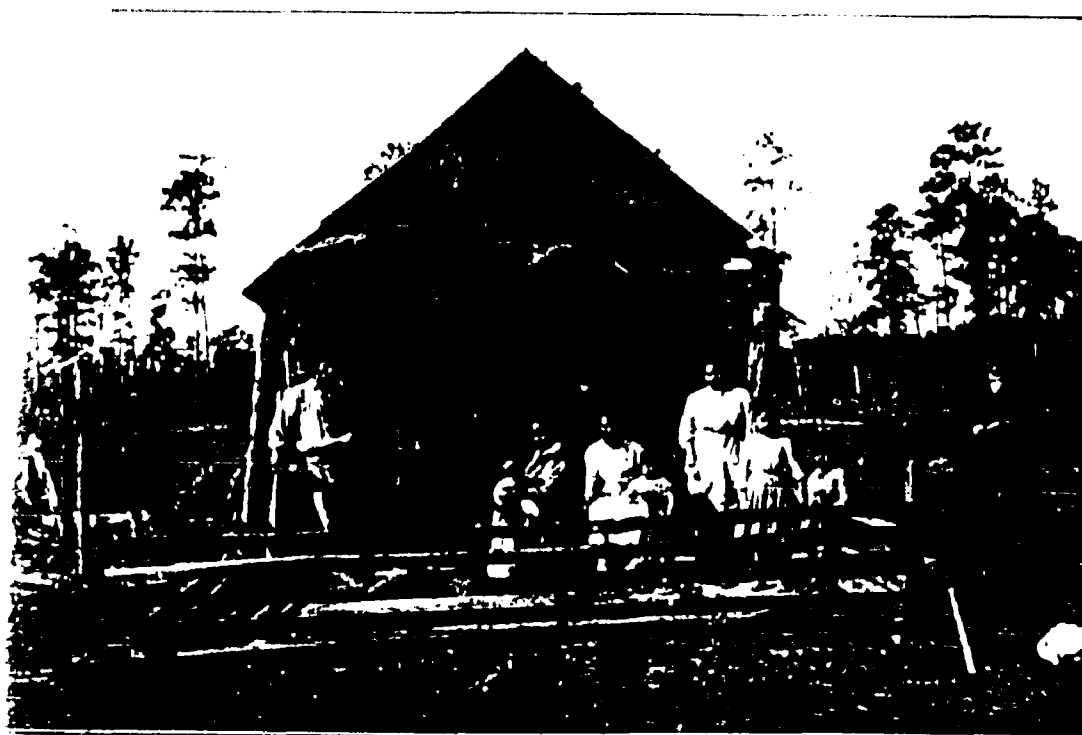
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<sup>6</sup>Bushnell, "The Choctaw of Bayou Lacombe," p. 7, Pl. 12.



(D. I. Bushnell)

A Choctaw Palmetto House Near Mandeville



(D. I. Bushnell)

An Early Camp of Boards Near Bayou Lacombe (c. 1846)

individualists on the settlement fringe, the frontiersmen, often lived with Indians, used Indian dwellings, or built Indian houses. Even substantial farmers and planters of the earliest days sometimes bought and lived in Indian houses until their homes could be built.<sup>7</sup> These dwellings could be built easily and quickly, and undoubtedly were of importance, at least on the frontiers.

The temporary structures erected by the French must necessarily have been quite like the Indian, for they had no other models and had to use local materials. The instructions of the Company of the Indies to the chief engineer concerning the building of New Orleans included a rather unnecessary suggestion that he "start work by throwing up rough shelters for both men and goods."<sup>8</sup> When Du Pratz arrived at the site of New Orleans in 1719, it was "only marked out by a hut, covered with palmetto-leaves, and which the commandant had caused to be built for his own lodging."<sup>9</sup> A German immigrant said of New Orleans houses in 1720: "The houses are poor and low as at home with us in the country. They are covered with large pieces of bark and strong reeds."<sup>10</sup> Two years later Charlevoix wrote that New Orleans had "perhaps a hundred scattered huts, a big wooden store, two houses which would not be considered decorative in a French village, and half a wretched store."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Du Pratz, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>Dawson, Warrington, "A History of the Foundation of New Orleans (1717-1722)," La. Hist. Quart., III (1920), 151-251, ref. cit., p. 185.

<sup>9</sup>Du Pratz, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>10</sup>Deiler, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 230.

A Frenchman wrote in 1719: "The houses are built plainly, as in the country districts at home, and are covered with large pieces of tree bark and big canes."<sup>12</sup>

The formative period for colonial architecture was that time when attempts were being made to develop substantial dwellings. It was a critical time for the infusion of Indian methods and forms. These had the best chance of being incorporated in colonial architecture when temporary dwellings and provisional structures were being used. Once the form and method of construction had been developed for a pioneer dwelling, it was continued without much change, but with a very gradual evolution. It was undoubtedly during this formative period that the camp and shotgun houses emerged from the temporary buildings in method and form. They were largely developed by the nonagricultural frontiersmen.

#### Palmetto Houses

Dwellings constructed of a framework covered with palmetto fronds were widely used at the time of earliest settlement. It cannot be safely assumed that the palmetto dwelling of historic times was identical with the aboriginal dwelling, but there is a continuum of that kind of construction. The extent to which the Indian palmetto habitation suggested that kind of dwelling can only be surmised, but it must have been great.

In 1704 at Fort Louis de la Mobile there were "eighty wooden houses of one story covered with palmetto leaves or straw, . . ."<sup>13</sup> Not only

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 198

<sup>13</sup>Roland, Dunbar, and Sanders, Albert G., Mississippi Provincial Archives 1701-1729 French Dominion, (Jackson: Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, 1929), Vol. 2, pp. 19-20.

did the frontiersman make use of such dwellings, but also the planter. DuPratz built and bought such structures from the Indians for his plantation on Bayou St. John.<sup>14</sup> He describes the construction of a tobacco-house, and indicates that it is like the pioneer dwelling:

" . . . they set several posts in the ground, at equal distance from one another, and lay a beam or plate on the top of them, making thus the form of a house of an oblong square. In the middle of this square they set up two forks, about one third higher than the posts, and lay a pole cross them, for the ridge-pole of the building; upon which they then nail the rafters, and cover them with cypress-bark, or palmetto leaves. The first settlers likewise build their dwelling-houses in this manner, . . ."<sup>15</sup>

The palmetto houses of the Spanish Isleños of Bayou Terre aux Boeuf are described by Fortier:

"The land comprised between the two branches of the bayou was l'Ile, which we had come to see. The dwellings are on both sides of the bayou and are mostly palmetto huts . . . The palmetto huts struck me with amazement — how could human beings in a civilized country live in such dwellings! There is no chimney, and the fire is made in the hut on a few bricks, the smoke escaping through an opening in the roof."<sup>16</sup>

The palmetto house was numerically important and widespread throughout coastal Louisiana well into the present century. Its general decline seems to have begun about 1930. There does not seem to be a single occupied palmetto dwelling extant in Louisiana, and the use of palmetto for any purpose has all but disappeared. There are only a few cases of its being used for shelters or parts of shelters. Its last use in connection with dwellings was for roofing. It has been replaced as a roofing material by tarpaper which is inexpensive and

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<sup>14</sup>DuPratz, op. cit., pp. 18-25.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>16</sup>Fortier, Louisiana Studies, p. 206.

can be applied easily in a matter of hours, whereas a good palmetto roof would require much more effort and time. Where palmetto is used today, probably not more than fifty cases, it is used for crude shelters for livestock or small boat sheds. These structures are built of a framework of scrap wood to which the palmetto leaves are nailed.

The disappearance of the palmetto house is so recent that most people of the middle generation well remember how common the house was and much about its construction. The house was clearly associated with the trapper-fisher-swamper complex. It was quite unimportant among the farmers. They used palmetto only for temporary shelters or makeshift sheds for livestock. Hence, its tradition is important only on the lower and smaller bayous.

The Louisiana-French name for the palmetto plant is latanier.<sup>17</sup> This plant is a genus of dwarf palm (Sabal minor) which grows abundantly in certain kinds of habitats in coastal Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley: natural levees, levee slopes, and swamp margins. It does not grow in the marshes or permanently flooded lands. The palmetto plant was important in the Indian and pioneer economies. It had many uses in addition to thatch, viz., food (heart of the trunk), fans, mats, baskets, and hats.

The palmetto house of the recent past in its simplest form was rectangular and had a high-pitched gabled roof, with a thatch about one foot thick. The door was fixed in the gable end and the house was oriented with its greatest length perpendicular to the bayou, path, or road. It was constructed of a framework of small poles

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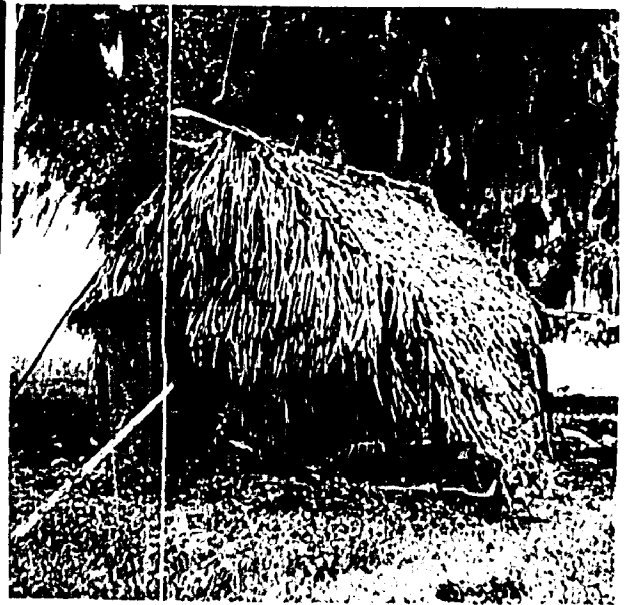
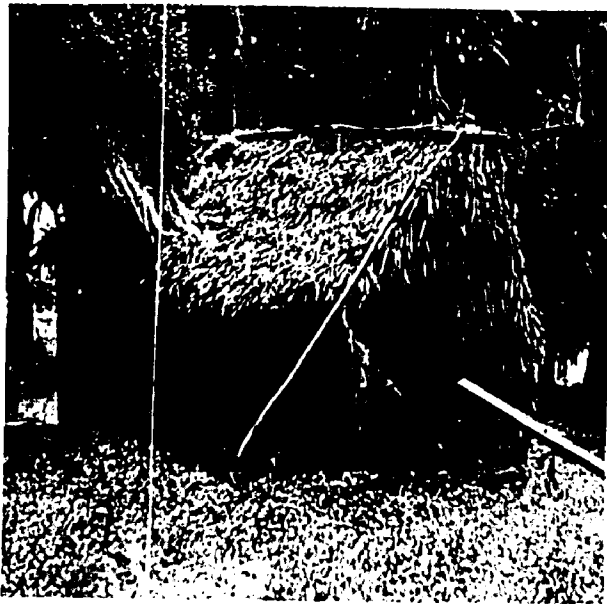
<sup>17</sup>Reed, W.A., Louisiana French, p. 91. The word is of Carib Indian origin.

to which rows of palmetto leaves were either tied or nailed, covering the whole dwelling, sides, gable ends, and roof. The dimensions were small; the approximate width was ten feet, the length a few feet more. The most rudimentary of such dwellings did not possess windows or a chimney. The door was of batten construction and was not shielded by any kind of porch.

The only extant example of a palmetto house is located on the left bank of Bayou Pointe au Chien about half a mile below Grand Bayou Canal and the end of the bayou road (Pl. 26). It is very small and rudimentary, and its form and size would place it in the category of camps. The dimensions are nine by twelve feet. The frame is set on four piers of wood, one at each corner, one-foot high. The frame consists of four small upright posts, five feet in length, one at each corner. Smaller poles are attached to the tops of the uprights to form the square. The roof is a simple couple-close roof, V-shaped braces or six feet length at each end and in the middle support a ridge pole. Three tie beams at gable-level run from side to side. The frame and poles to which the palmetto leaves are attached are held together by nails. The poles which hold the palmetto fronds are about one inch in diameter, fairly straight small tree limbs, and are improved only by having the smaller branches removed. The poles run from front to back, number five for each side and each shed of the roof, and are irregularly spaced at about one-foot intervals. The palmetto fronds are tied to these poles.

The manner of securing the fronds is as follows: one strand is separated from the frond on both sides and these are wrapped around the pole and frond stem and tied in front; the left strand passes under





Bayou Pointe au Chien

Recent Palmetto Camp

the back of the pole, around and over the pole to the front; the right strand passes between the leaf and pole, up over the pole, around the back and across the front of the frond on the opposite side; the two strands are then tied in a slipknot in the front. The stem of the frond is about one and a half feet in length and is forced against the pole next above which holds the frond in a firm upright position. This may represent the earliest method, possibly even the aboriginal, or it may be a unique innovation; there is no other example.

The door of the house is of batten construction and hinged to a corner post. Although this places the door where there is the least overhead room, it greatly simplifies construction as an additional post is not needed to support the door. The low walls require that the door be placed in the gable end. This same door location is found in some modern dwellings of the camp and shotgun categories. This particular house is without any kind of porch, windows, or chimney, and it may well represent and bear a close resemblance to the earliest frontier dwelling in French Louisiana.

The palmetto houses of recent times as described by informants were more elaborate than the above specimen. They are said to have been very servicable and substantial (Pl. 27). They were larger, and although most were of only one room, some were partitioned or half-partitioned into rooms by palmetto-frond walls or drapes (blankets). They were provided with window casements and door jambs, fitted with simple batten shutters and doors. The doors were most often in the gable end, and usually in the center for the side walls were generally not high enough for doors. This was not invariably the case, for they might have been put in the side. If the latter method was used, then



(R. J. Russell)

A Recent Palmetto House (c. 1935)

the orientation of the house would be changed so that the length and ridge pole would be parallel to bayou, road, or path.

The houses were elevated on piers of cypress logs, the floors were boarded. Doorways were often sheltered by shed-roof porches which ran the width of the building. The chimney was generally in the back, either in the center or to one side. Various solutions were found for the fire hazard. A fireplace and chimney made of a lathwork frame covered with mud were commonly used. Iron stoves and metal pipes were used, or fireplaces of brick or earth with just the pipes for chimneys. Some surviving Isleños describe an unusual arrangement that is best termed a "smoke hole." A fireplace consisting of a square of bricks or earth was built in one back corner. The walls of that corner were daubed with mud to the ceiling and there was an opening. Sometimes this opening was fitted with a "pipe" of clay.

### Camps

The "camp" is a regionally recognized house type. The word refers to a kind of house, rather than any temporary or provisional dwelling. In general, the form is like that of the palmetto house, which would be included in the designation, and which might frequently have been called "palmetto camp" or "palmetto house." Today the camp dwelling is constructed only in wood, or a wooden frame with a covering of something other than palmetto. It may be a rather crude and temporary dwelling or it may be a well-built permanent house.

The body of the camp is rectangular; the width is from ten to fifteen feet and the length is usually somewhat greater. There is usually only one room, but that may be subdivided. The door is usually

in the gable end, and the house is oriented with the long axis pointing toward the bayou or road. The door may be placed in the center, or offset to one side, as in the case of the palmetto house. Not often is the door put in the long side of the dwelling, either because of tradition or lack of height. If this is done, then the orientation of the house is changed so that the long side and ridge pole run parallel to the road or bayou. This feature and orientation are distinctly characteristic of the very latest camps.

The materials of construction, or coverings for the frame, vary according to age and the degree of permanency sought. All but the earliest type are in use today. The earliest camps of wood were covered on both sides and roof with hand-riven shakes a few feet in length. These were nailed to the frame in a vertical position reminiscent of the palmetto thatch. A double row was usually adequate to cover a side and a double row would cover one shed of the roof. This kind of construction is no longer used for dwellings, but it is still preserved in some simple barns and sheds. Riven shakes are no longer made, but many are obtained from old buildings that are torn down.

The next type of covering for the camp frame in the evolutionary sequence was board-and-batten (Pl. 28, Fig. a). This kind of construction was made possible when greater lengths of planking were available, either whipsawed or milled. Planks were available from almost the beginning of settlement but usually not to those who built camps. Board-and-batten is widely used today and is not exclusively associated with crude dwellings. It is possible that board-and-batten construction had a very crude or rudimentary beginning, and it may have been done with hand-riven materials.



Bayou Barataria

Fig. a. Porchless Camp: Board-and-batten Construction



Bayou Boeuf near Kraemer

Fig. b. Porchless Camp: Clapboard Construction

Clapboarding (weatherboarding) appeared later when better lumber was more readily obtained. A clapboarded camp (Pl. 28, Fig. b) is not necessarily a better constructed dwelling. All types of camps were often roofed with palmetto until recent times. Few houses are painted in the region, and the modern camp is one of the few types likely to be painted in the densely settled areas. New materials of nonregional sources have provided the most recent variety for the camp. Galvanized iron and tarpaper have completely replaced palmetto for roofing. Tarpaper is also widely used for covering the sides. Imitation brick tarpaper is used for sturdy camps; ordinary black is used for the simplest camp. A dwelling built to be covered with tarpaper is constructed with vertical boards without batten, or horizontal boards (not clapboards).

The simplest camp is a room without a porch (Pls. 28 and 29). This porchless camp represents the primitive dwelling for the region. It is the basic unit which is discernible in more complex houses. By the addition of porches of various kinds and other appendages, the camp has been made more elaborate. The porch is such a prominent part of the house that the appearance is changed by the different porch attachments. The simplest is the shed-porch (Pl. 30). Two types are integral with the roof structure: (1) the recessed porch (Pl. 31), and (2) the A-porch (Pl. 32). The last named is the most common.

Other specific dwellings come under the category of camps. A special type is that of the oysterman.<sup>18</sup> This house has the fundamental form and other aspects of the basic camp with the special addition of

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<sup>18</sup>Kniffen, "Louisiana House Types," p. 187, Fig. 12.



Bayou Pointe au Chien

Fig. a. Porchless Camp: Board-and-batten Construction



Bayou Pointe au Chien



Bayou Pointe au Chien

Fig. b. Porchless Camps: Tarpaper Siding





Bayou Du Large

Fig. a. Shed-porch Camp: Board-and-batten Construction



Bayou St. Jean Charles

Fig. b. Shed-porch Camp: Clapboard Construction



Lower Bayou Lafourche

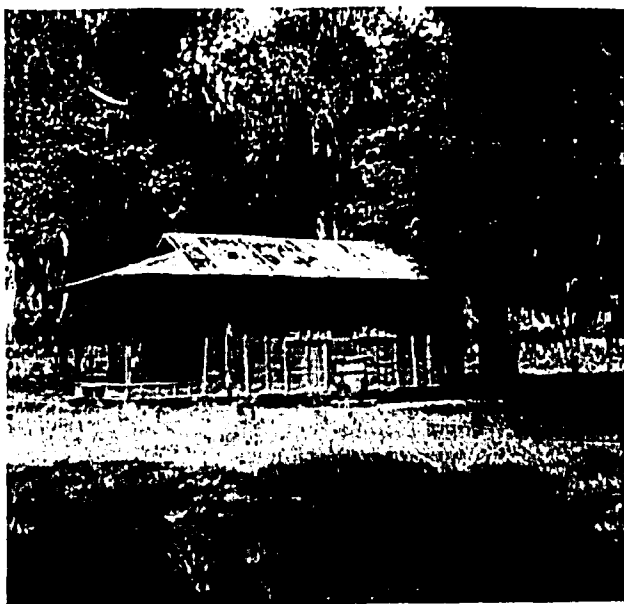
Camp Façade: Type C



Near White Castle



Bayou St. Jean Charles



Bayou Pointe au Chien

Camp Façades: Type A

a platform raised on piers of greater height than is usual for the region. Its distribution is highly restricted: the semi-circle of bays around Timbalier Bay, Barataria Bay, and Bay Boudreau.

The trapper's shack<sup>19</sup> would definitely be designated "camp" although the form is unlike the typical dwelling. The principal difference is the shed roof (Pl. 33). The trapper's shack is a camp in the literal sense of the word; it is used only during the trapping season. It is restricted in its distribution to the trapping marshes and characteristically occurs in an isolated situation. Little is expended on its construction. It must be abandoned for more than half a year, and there is every possibility that the trapper may not return the next year. The stability of the house depends to a large extent on the determination of the trapper to return; some live by trapping while others may trap if a good season is in prospect or other factors are favorable. For these reasons the trapper's dwelling may be a "shack" or a more substantial V-root camp. Seldom is the trapper's shack built for any other purpose. It does not occur as a dwelling on the well-settled bayous.

The camp dwellings are distinctly associated with the trapper--fisher-swamper complex. They rarely occur in the farming or plantation landscapes. Single camps occur around the swamp margins and strings of camps occur along small bayous and the lower ends of bayou settlements.

#### The Shotgun House

The "shotgun" house is very closely related to the camp. The

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 187, Fig. 11.



Near Intracoastal City

A Shed-roof Trapper's Camp

form, materials of construction, and façades and porches are like those of the camp. The basic difference is the size. Like the camp, it is never more than one room wide. It is usually three rooms in depth. If it is less, it may or may not be considered a camp. Such a form would be transitional, but it is infrequent. In most cases the distinction between camp and shotgun is easily made.

The term "shotgun," often used with the word "house," is the most commonly used name for this type of dwelling. It is perhaps the most easily recognized of all house types, inasmuch as it is often identified by those who are unaware of the other kinds of dwellings. The name is not used in the areas in which this house is most numerous. It comes mainly from the cities and the country to which it has spread.

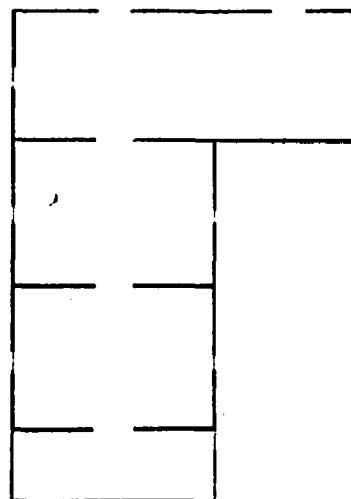
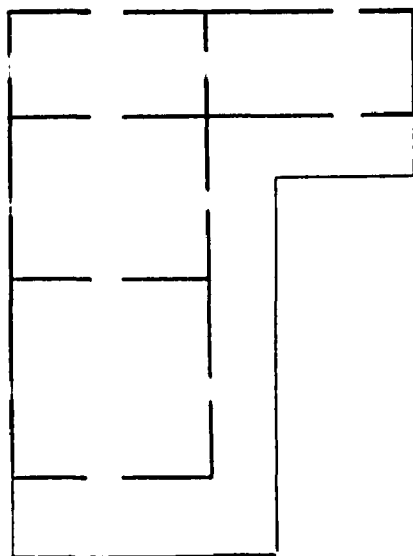
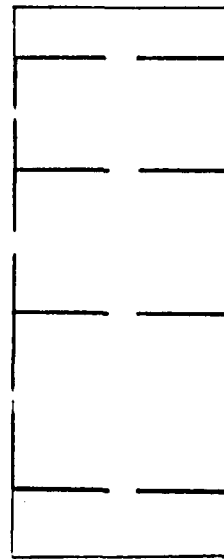
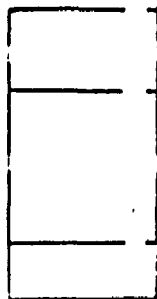
The shotgun house is associated with the same landscape as the camp, with a few exceptions. Usually it is not an isolated swamp or marsh dwelling. It belongs to the dense clusters of settlement on the lower bayous, but it is not the dwelling of the farmer, and was less so in the past than today. Within modern times, the shotgun has moved up the bayou settlements into the agricultural sections. It is widely used as the tenant or quarter-house on plantations within the region, and far beyond into the northern part of the state. It is often used as the quarter-house for lumbering settlements which are usually not permanent. This factor may account for some of the rapidity with which it has spread throughout the state. Its diffusion has been more rapid in the more prosperous areas. The ease, rapidity, and small expense of building have made it a popular house with the small-wage laborer. As there are more and more such wage jobs along the bayous, the shotgun house has begun to creep in among the other houses of the

small-farm landscapes. It is spreading rapidly and will soon dominate bayou landscapes where it was once foreign.

The shotgun house of today varies considerably in size. The typical shotgun house is larger than the camp, greater in width and length. The variations are both local and regional. The smallest houses are no wider than a camp, but are three rooms in length. These are associated with the lower extremities of bayou settlements. There the distinction between camp and shotgun house is not always clear, especially if the dwelling is of two-room length. Along Bayou Lafourche, in the middle and upper portions, along the Mississippi, and in general near and within agricultural settlements, the shotgun houses are larger, except where they are quarter-houses or Negro dwellings. The largest concentration of wide shotgun houses is along Bayou Lafourche, where they are thirty feet and more in width and have a corresponding increase in length. In these areas the minimum depth is three rooms.

The plan of the house is very simple. Typically, it consists of three rooms, one directly behind the other. The front door and the succeeding doors between partitions to the back door may be aligned either in the center, or to one side for some of the smaller houses. This feature has given rise to the most popular explanation for the term "shotgun house," viz., that with all the doors open, a shotgun may be fired through the front door and the charge would pass through the house and out the back door without causing any damage. That is the most common arrangement, but the doors may be offset. The common floor plans are given in Plate 34.

Beyond the simple three-room house, there are more complex subtypes



SHOTGUN HOUSE FLOOR PLANS

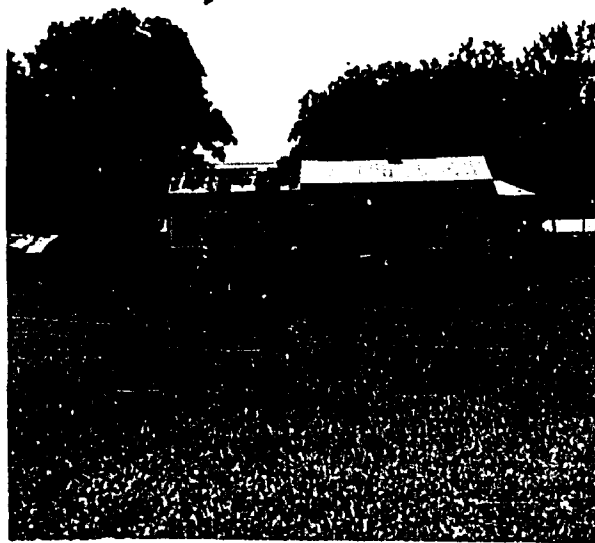


derived from the manner of attaching a one-room appendage. The additional room is almost always a kitchen, and even though it is built with the house, it often has the appearance of having been an afterthought. It is clear that the three-room shotgun house grew by additions of rooms to the rear of the single-room camp. In many specific cases shotgun dwellings developed from camps during one generation by the gradual addition of rooms as a family grew. The evolution took place over some length of time in the general differentiation of camp and shotgun house, and not with each individual house.

A distinct feature of early dwellings, regardless of type, was the separation of house and kitchen. It was also a widespread Indian trait. In the case of the palmetto house, it was especially desirable to have a separate kitchen or cooking shed because of the danger of fire. The early shotgun house often had a detached kitchen, and this trait has persisted to the present (Pls. 35 and 36). In the evolution of the shotgun house, the kitchen was gradually integrated with the main house. Several ways of attaching the extra room have evolved. If the main house was only two rooms deep, the extra room was added with the ridge pole either in line with the main house, or perpendicular to it. In the latter case a distinct subtype was created; one with a T-form or T-shaped ridge poles (Pl. 37). A fourth room was always added to the side, and the resulting form of the house was L-shaped (Pl. 38). These forms became conventionalized and are today distinct subtypes of shotgun houses. They are not so common as the basic straight shotgun house, but they are very numerous. They are not always larger than the simple shotgun. The difference is primarily one of form and not size.



Erwinville



Near St. James

Shotgun House Appendages: Detached Kitchens



Bayou Du Large

Shotgun House Appendage: Type T



St. Amant



Bayou Du Large

Shotgun House Appendages: Type T



Bayou Du Large



New River

Shotgun House Appendages: Type L

The covering materials (siding and roofing) for shotgun houses are of the same kinds and same evolution as those of the camps. Sidings of board-and-batten and weatherboarding are by far the most common, and originated early in probably that sequence. Roofs of palmetto thatch survived well into the present century as the last vestige of palmetto construction. From earliest times, shingle roofs were also used and they must have shared equal importance with palmetto thatch. Beginning in the 1920's and 1930's, constructional materials of non-regional sources became available. Galvanized iron, the "tin roof," has all but completely replaced the wooden shingle, and palmetto roofs completely disappeared in the 1940's. Tarpaper, especially that kind which has the appearance of brick, is widely used as siding. It may be used to cover board-and-batten construction, or houses that are built with the intentions of covering them with tarpaper. The latter consist of a frame to which vertical boards are nailed without batten. There do not seem to be any local or subregional differences in the distribution of these features. Rarely are the board-and-batten shotgun houses of the more complex subtypes (either T or L-shaped houses). They are usually smaller and are rarely painted. The larger and more complex houses are usually weatherboarded and sometimes painted.

The elaboration of the façade produces many subtle differences within the category of shotgun houses. The various kinds of façades are derived from the manner of providing a front porch for the house. No shotgun house is without a porch. Beyond the slight differences in form and materials of construction, it is the porch which gives character to these otherwise simple dwellings.

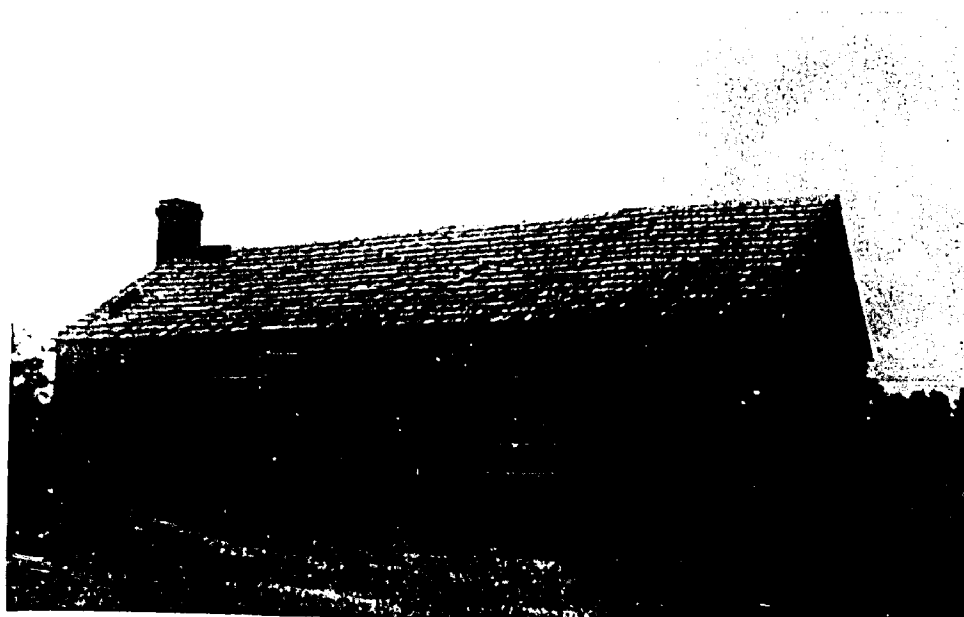
The different types of façades are illustrated in Plates 39 to 43. They are identified by letters which will be used in referring to them in the text. There is no distinct localization of any type; all occur throughout the region. Certain general distributional facts can be related to age differences. The oldest types are undoubtedly the S, D, and A façades. These are also the most common and probably represent indigenous developments. They are most characteristic of the older settlements on the lower bayous. There are stretches along the Terrebonne bayous and along Bayou Lafourche where unpainted clapboard and board-and-batten A-, D-, and S-façade shotgun houses occur in almost pure concentrations which preserve examples of a landscape which is very old, and which had not begun to change much more than thirty years ago. The only notable difference is the absence of palmetto and wooden-shingle roofs. The most recent types are the V and T groups; the latter has appeared only within the past twenty years. It seems to be adopted from one variation of the basic Southern bungalow. It is very popular for it can give a more impressive appearance to an otherwise simple house. That is especially true for the wage laborer and, therefore, these houses are more common nearer urban centers and industrial sites. They are usually painted or covered with imitation brick tarpaper. This is true of the V group of façades to some extent.

Items of lesser importance are back porches and chimneys. The shotgun house is seldom without a back porch. These are usually the simpler kinds of porches used on the front of the house. The house is so small that when open fireplaces were used, one was sufficient. It was usually located in the last room which is the kitchen. Most often it was in the back wall, rarely in a side wall. The first



Bayou Du Large

Fig. a. Shotgun House Façade: Type S



Bayou Du Large

Fig. b. Shotgun House Façade: Type C





Bayou Pointe au Chien

Fig. a. Bayou Shotgun House



Near Bayou Goula

Fig. b. Plantation Landscape  
Shotgun House



Bayou Du Large

Fig. c. Bayou Shotgun House

Shotgun House Façades: Type D



Bayou Du Large

Fig. a. Plantation Landscape Shotgun House



Near Vacherie

Fig. b. Plantation Landscape  
Shotgun House



Bayou Pointe au Chien

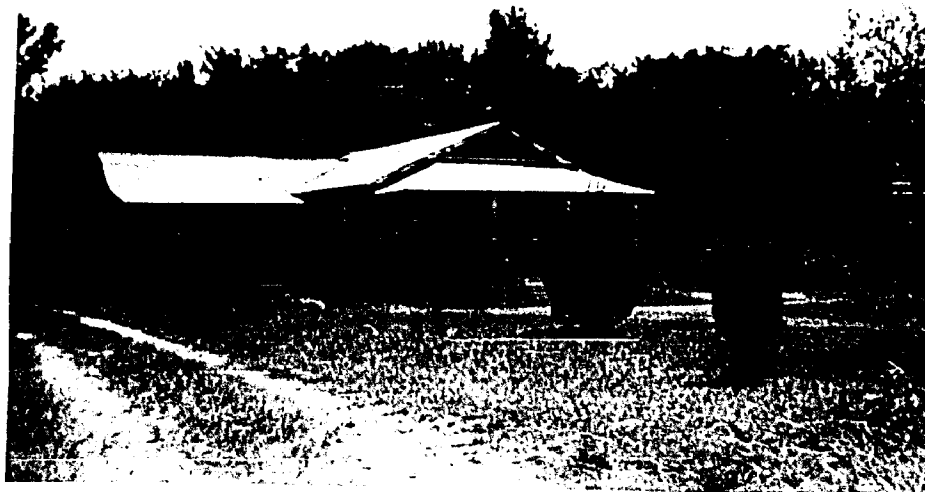
Fig. c. Bayou Shotgun House

Shotgun House Façades: Type A



Bayou Du Large

Fig. a. Shotgun House Façade: Type T



Bayou Du Large

Fig. b. Shotgun House Façade: Type P



Bayou Gauche



Bayou Gauche

Fig. a. Shotgun House Façades: Type V



Bayou Gauche



Bayou Gauche

Fig. b. Shotgun House Façade: Type F      Fig. c. Shotgun House Façade: Type SD

chimneys were constructed of lathwork and mud. Brick was often beyond the means of people who lived in this kind of house. Today, fireplaces have been almost entirely replaced by factory-made stoves. The old "mud chimney" (Pl. 36, Fig. a) is almost extinct, but the brick is still fairly common. The greater adaptability of the modern stoves permits a variety of arrangements, and except where wood is the fuel, removes the necessity of a chimney.

The entire camp and shotgun groups of dwellings are basically similar and closely interrelated. There are variations in size and elaboration of detail on a fundamental theme. That theme seems to have at its primitive base the rudimentary palmetto camp dwelling, which in turn seems to possess continuity with the Indian dwellings. Given the basic single-room camp, the evolution of the more complex dwellings is apparent. All stages of the evolution are represented in present dwellings. All varieties in form survive, from the porchless, board--and-batten camp to the modern shotgun house covered with clapboards and painted. All but the earliest materials of construction occur in quantity; only palmetto thatch and riven boards have disappeared. Only a few wooden-shingle roofs survive.

These dwellings are distinctly associated with the trapper-fisher--swamper landscape. The whole evolutionary development, the multiplication and diversification of forms and materials have taken place within this culture group. No other complex, with the possible exception of boats, so characterizes the trapper-fisher-swamper culture group as does the camp-shotgun group of dwellings.

### The Creole Dwellings

The planter and farmer derived a distinctive type of architecture which is best designated "Louisiana Creole." This usage of the term is valid even with the strictest definition. In its most limited sense, the word "Creole" refers to a person born of French or Spanish nationals in a colony.<sup>20</sup> An expansion of the term to include later generations, beyond the colonial period even to the present, is generally accepted. The word has much utility and meaning when used in this sense. The distinction between first and succeeding generations or descendants of European French and Spanish is now of little value and obscures the fact of continuity of the culture derived by these people. Thus, anything which is distinctively a part of that culture is Creole. The important distinction between these people and those Louisiana French of Acadian descent is recognized in the use of the word Cajun in reference to the latter.<sup>21</sup>

The Creole house is that house which was developed by French elements in Louisiana during the colonial period. No more fitting name could be given. Sometimes the Creole house is erroneously called "Acadian" house. Even though it is the characteristic dwelling of the Cajun, it is nonetheless of Creole derivation and was built before the Acadians arrived in Louisiana.

The Creole house is easily recognized but not easily defined. It is a composite of elements which by definition alone does not characterize it, and which may vary from one particular house to the next. The

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<sup>20</sup>Reed, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 79. Cajun is a corruption of Acadian.

fundamental morphological features of the basic Creole house are: a rectangular body with a saddle roof and sideward-facing gables; a deep galerie or porch, the roof of which is continuous with that of the body of the house (Pl. 44, Fig. a). The principal variation on this basic form is the gableless hip-roof house (pl. 44, Fig. b.). It is of far less frequent occurrence and is associated with the planter class. The gabled Creole house is associated with the small-farmer class. The size and elaboration of details vary widely from simple houses of only a single room to the large houses of plantations. The porch supports are always posts and not columns or pillars. The gabled house rarely has any other galleries than the front and, sometimes, back. The hip-roof house often has side galleries, and sometimes a galerie completely around the house.

The gabled Creole house is rectangular or almost square in plan, and is either one or one and a half stories high. The width of the average house is about twenty-five to thirty feet. The length, from front to back, may be slightly more than the width or as great as seventy-five feet. If the rectangularity is distinct, the long measurement runs from front to back. The hip-roof house is generally more rectangular, and is oriented with its long axis parallel to the road. For both kinds of houses the roof ridge runs from side to side. The dimensions of the hip-roof house vary from about thirty to over a hundred feet in width. It is generally larger than the gabled house, and often may have two stories, with galleries for both floors.

The fundamental plan of this kind of house consists of two rooms, side by side, each with a door to the front galerie. Many houses may have only these two rooms. Most have more, but they are always secondary



Near Hohen Solms

Fig. a. A Gabled House



Braithwaite

Fig. b. A Hip-roof House



Near Plaquemine

Fig. c. A Pyramidal-roof House



Near Plaquemine

Fig. d. A Creole Bungalow

Types of Creole Houses



to the two chief rooms. Creole houses of only a single room in width do occur, but other than those used for quarter-houses, they are uncommon.

The Creole house came into existence contemporaneously with the earliest settlement and has persisted with changes only in materials and details. It has not been built in important numbers since about the first decade of the twentieth century. As a type of folk architecture it is extinct, for when new houses are built some other types are used. The house is widespread throughout French Louisiana today because many of them are still in fine to adequate condition. It will take many generations before the Creole house is completely replaced by some other types.

#### Southern Architecture

Creole architecture is distinct from all other kinds of Southern architecture, either that of the folk dwellings or the plantation houses. Its distribution is highly restricted and it neither added to, nor borrowed from, Southern regional architecture to a great extent. The folk dwelling of the Deep South has the log cabin for its primitive base. The evolution passed through easily recognized stages beginning with the single-room cabin, then the two-rooms-and-a-passage house, or the dog-trot house, then the central-passage frame house and from that to the many varieties of frame structures derived from both the single and double cabins. The only departure from this theme has been the bungalow and shotgun houses. The shotgun must have begun elsewhere in ways similar to that in Louisiana, but the bungalow is more recent, and is yet to be explained.

The mansion or plantation architecture of the South has separate beginnings. This kind of architecture is most frequently called "Southern colonial;" almost anything with white columns or pillars receives this epithet. It does not constitute a single type, and it is not all colonial architecture, as some of it was not developed in a colony.<sup>22</sup> The term "colonial" alone has no bearing in this respect. By the same token, Creole architecture is valid colonial architecture. A small hut may be as much colonial in origin as a mansion. There is no widely used name for this group of architectural forms.

The Southern manor or plantation house with the facade of large white columns did not develop until about 1800. Often houses of this group are called ante-bellum, which only dates them. The term "Georgian" is frequently used to designate some of these houses, but it is a style of ornamentation and decoration more often than a type of architecture. Georgian detail became important beginning about 1700, and much was included in the new Southern architecture, but nothing genuinely Georgian extended beyond 1825.

Two other names for a kind of Southern pillared architecture are "neo-classic" and "Greek revival." These terms characterize the outstanding features of the mansions, the faades. But, these houses are more Southern than classical Greek in form, plan, and materials. Many varieties of detail may be distinguished in these buildings even though they be generally grouped under the term "classical." The classical part is actually only the pediment and pillars. Various influences of

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<sup>22</sup>Smith, J. F., op. cit., p. 214.

particular architects and times occur in great complexity. But, in the basic plan of many can be seen the elements of log-cabin architecture.

This kind of Southern architecture diffused through French Louisiana not long after it developed; 1830 is about the beginning date. Louisiana became a territory of the United States in 1803, then was given statehood in 1812, just at the time the new Southern mansion architecture was moving westward and southward. It was brought to Louisiana by the many Americans who entered after 1812 and became plantation owners. It was occasionally adopted by Creole planters. It then became interspersed among the older and entirely different French colonial architecture. The difference remains today, but the Creole plantation house is much more common.

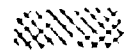
This applies only to the planter-class of dwellings. The Creole habitant continued to build his own house. It seems that he was not influenced by the new "Southern style," which was completely outside of his economic and cultural sphere, or the Southern log-cabin house forms which his American counterpart built to the north.

The hearth area for Creole architecture was the nucleus of French settlement along the lower Mississippi River and adjacent Gulf Coast to the east. It was carried far up the valley by early settlements and established in a number of places. It survives in some; in others it is a matter of record (pl. 45). It occurs along the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Mobile Bay. There are a few examples in Mobile itself. Along the coast of Mississippi it is abundantly represented. One of the earliest examples is Krebs Fort (Spanish Fort) near Pascagoula.<sup>23</sup> From the coast it extends northward along the Mississippi

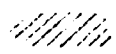
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<sup>23</sup> Mississippi, Work Projects Adm., American Guide Series, (New York, 1938), pp. 143, 146, 288-289.

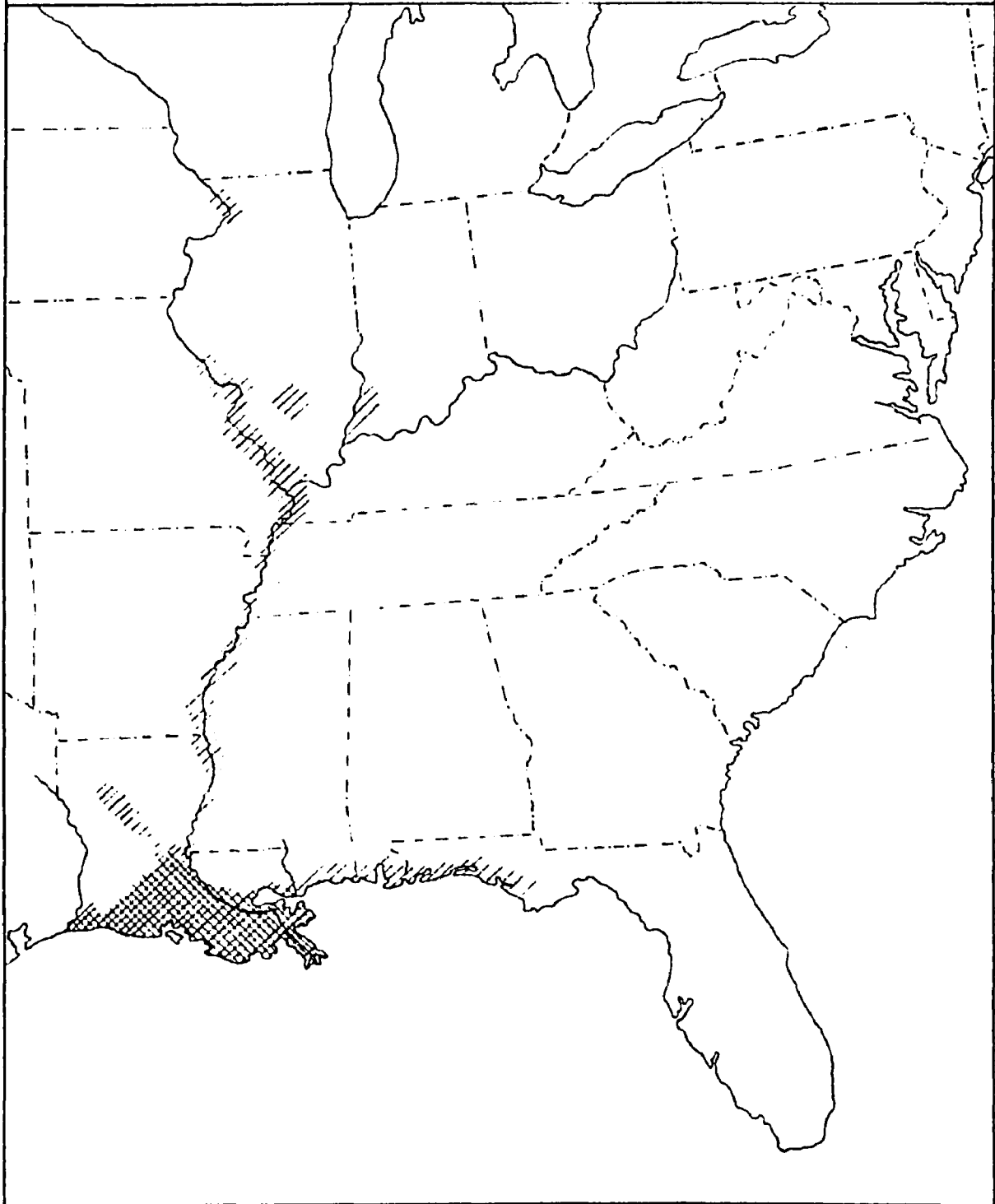
# DISTRIBUTION OF CREOLE ARCHITECTURE AT ITS GREATEST EXTENT



Major



Minor



into the Delta country. Here it is sometimes called "Spanish Provincial" or even "West Indian," but only in reference to the planter-class houses. In Arkansas there is little Creole architecture. However, the Belknap House in St. Charles is a remarkable example of early French half-timber construction.<sup>24</sup> In Illinois the French settlements were more extensive. There are, or were, cases of Creole architecture at Galena, East St. Louis, Alton, Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, Fort de Chartres, Shawmeetown, and Cairo.<sup>25</sup>

There was less on the Missouri side of the Mississippi.<sup>26</sup> An early settlement of special importance, which still contains many examples of Creole architecture is Ste. Genevieve. Cape Girardeau is another case. Half-timbered dwellings with wide galeries occur in St. Charles County, but these were built by Germans and are believed to be of German origin. They were built between 1850 and 1880. The Germans elsewhere in Missouri built stone houses. Those houses of stone in Perry and St. Charles counties do not have the central hall, and have wooden porches which resemble the Creole galerie.

#### Half-timbering in Europe

The oldest method of construction in French-Louisiana is half-timbering. The beginning of the half-timbered house lies in Europe,

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<sup>24</sup>Arkansas, W.P.A., Amer. Guide Series (New York, 1941), pp. 103-105.

<sup>25</sup>Illinois, W.P.A., Amer. Guide Series (New York, 1939), pp. 98, 99, 493, 497.

<sup>26</sup>Missouri, W.P.A., Amer. Guide Series (New York, 1941), pp. 178-186.

whence the general technique was transported to various places on the North American continent. The two principal areas were New England, where the English introduced both the half-timbering technique and certain aspects of house form, and in the Mississippi Valley in the nuclei of early French settlements. Differences in form and materials between the French and English dwellings depended on the initial differences in the homeland, the different kinds of country in America, and endemic changes.

There are two kinds of house construction of ancient age in western Europe.<sup>27</sup> Stone construction dominates the south, and half-timbering is basic in the north. The dividing line runs from south of Brittany to Switzerland. There is evidence that half-timbering existed in places south of this line in prehistoric times, but was replaced at an early date by stone construction. During Roman Empire times brick became important throughout western Mediterranean Europe. The region of half-timber work in northwestern Europe includes the provinces of Brittany and Normandy, the Low Countries, England (but not Ireland, Wales, and the Scottish highlands where Celtic forms persist), Denmark, Scandia, northwestern Germany, and Switzerland, diminishing eastwards and southeastwards. Ancient forms of half-timbering have been found outside this core area: in southern France, Spain, and northern Sweden. These are believed by Erixon to represent distributions at the time of the development of the primitive half-timbered house.

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<sup>27</sup>Erixon, Sigurd, "West European Connections and Culture Relations," Folk-Liv, II (1938), 137-172, ref. cit., pp. 156-157.

Important culture thrusts did enter England from Normandy beginning with the 11th century (1066 for the Conquest). There is a close relationship between Norman and English half-timber work, but there is a more profound culture base in that respect. The two kinds of construction, stone and timber framing, are only two traits of the two first-order cultural divisions that lie at the foundation of western European culture. Half-timber work was known in England in pre-Norman times and the primitive beginnings of timber framing in general can be interpreted from the English phase.<sup>28</sup> Later growth and development were strongly influenced by Normandy.

In France, half-timber construction centers in Normandy, although it occurs throughout the northern part of the country.<sup>29</sup> There is no typical Norman dwelling of this construction. Houses are framed in heavy oak and wall spaces are filled with a nogging of rubble, or rough or hewn stone, generally the native limestone. An important subtype is a house whose lower story is constructed entirely of stone with a second story of half-timber work. Roofs are thatched or covered

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<sup>28</sup>The church of Greenstead, Essex, England, the most primitive example of half-timbering in that country, is dated about 1013. Forman, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>29</sup>Demangeon, A., "L 'Habitation Rurale en France, Essai des Classification des Principaux Types," Ann. de Geog., XXIX (1920) 352-375. \_\_\_\_\_, "L 'Habitation Rurale," Geographie Universelle Vol. 6, Pt. 2, Demangeon, A., France Economique et Humaine 1, pp. 166-185, Armand Colin, Paris, 1946.

DeFoville, A., Enquete sur les Conditions de L 'Habitation en France: Les Maisons-types, 2 vols. 1894-1899, Paris.

Dion, Roger, Le Val de Loire, 752 pp., Arrault and Co., Tours, 1934, Book III, Pt. 1, Ch. 1. La Vie Rurale etc., Ch. 2. Ancienne Traditions Rurales.

Eberlein, Harold D., and Ramsdell, Roger W., Small Manor Houses and Farmsteads in France, 303 pp., 235 ill., J.B. Lippincott Co., New York, 1926.

with flat tiles. Large numbers of houses have the stone work stuccoed, but timbers are generally left exposed. Other details of construction and form are not pertinent.

### Half-timbering in the English Colonies

Aside from rather experimental uses of Indian dwellings, and provisional or temporary shelters, the colonists from England built their earliest dwellings from Virginia through New England of some kind of half-timber work. Five different methods of medieval England were used: (1) palisade, (2) puncheons and wattle-daub, (3) cruck, (4) timber frame with wattle-daub, or brick nogging, and (5) half-and-half construction in which the lower story was constructed of brick and the upper framed.<sup>30</sup>

### The Half-timbered Creole House

The oldest kind of Creole house extant today is the house of half-timber construction. Its general form and appearance is like other Creole houses. There are enough of these houses left so that they cannot yet be called rare. Almost any bayou, where there are Creole houses, will have one or two of half-timbered construction. Their external appearance is much like the ordinary frame house, and in some cases they are so well weatherboarded that they can be identified only by an examination of the interior. The inhabitant of today refers to them as old "muddy houses." They are well known only to the oldest generation (60 years and above), some of whom have built such

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<sup>30</sup>Forman, op. cit., pp. 98-100.

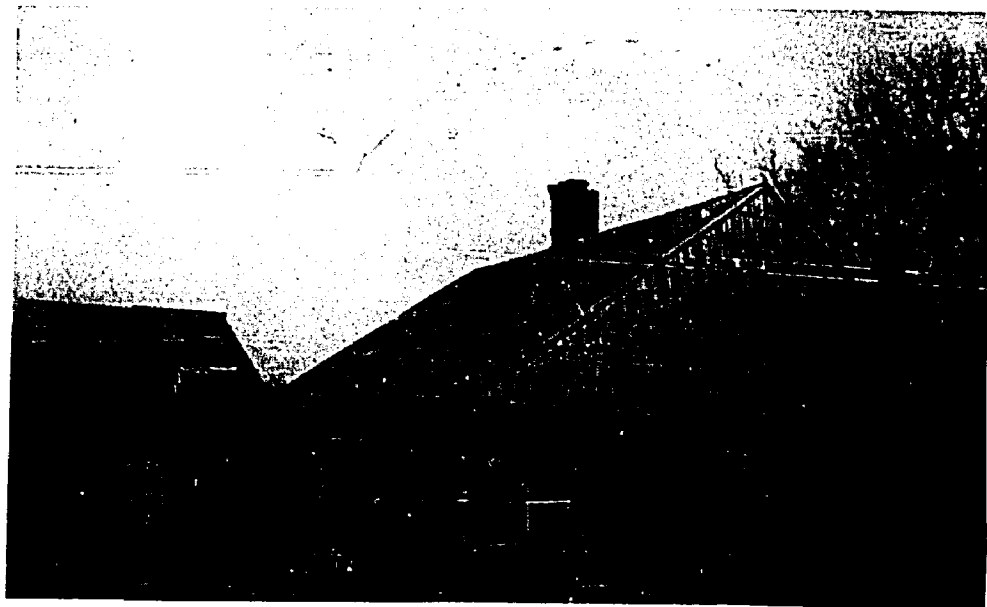
Garvan, Anthony, Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial Connecticut (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 89-91.



houses and remember much about the details of construction. Members of the middle generation (30 to 60 years) know little or nothing about such houses and are sometimes surprised to find that they exist. Very few were built after 1880, and the transition from half-timbered construction to ordinary frame house must have occurred over a span of several decades.

The two best examples of early half-timbered Creole houses occur in the Cane River "island" of Louisiana-French culture in Natchitoches Parish. The older of the two is the Rocque House which was built before 1750 (Pl. 46). The other is Yucca House, the original plantation house of Melrose, built in 1750 (Pl. 47). These two houses characterize the distinction between the early petit habitant and the planter. The Rocque House is gabled and only slightly smaller than Yucca House which is hip-rooted. These two houses come close to representing the earliest pioneer dwellings in French Louisiana.

The half-timbered Creole house of Louisiana, after early developments, was constructed of a heavy timber frame, which was mortised-and--tenoned and pinned together. The main timbers were often as much as a foot thick. All wood in the construction was cypress. An abundant supply of this excellent wood was available in the backswamps near any bayou. Nearly all of the preparatory work on the wood parts of the house was done at the site of cutting, in the cyprière, and then the pieces were carried to the building site. The heavy timbers for the frame were hewn, clapboards were sawn, shingles were rived, and possibly even some of the joinery work was done near the place where the trees were felled. The house raising was a communal affair for the small

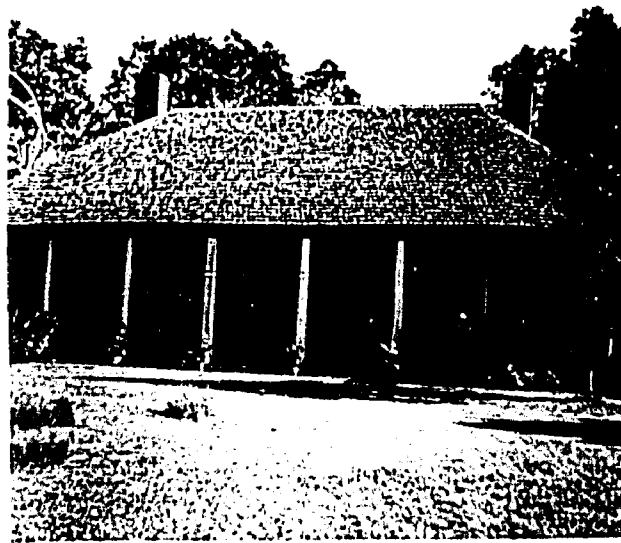


The Rocque House: An Example of Early Creole Architecture

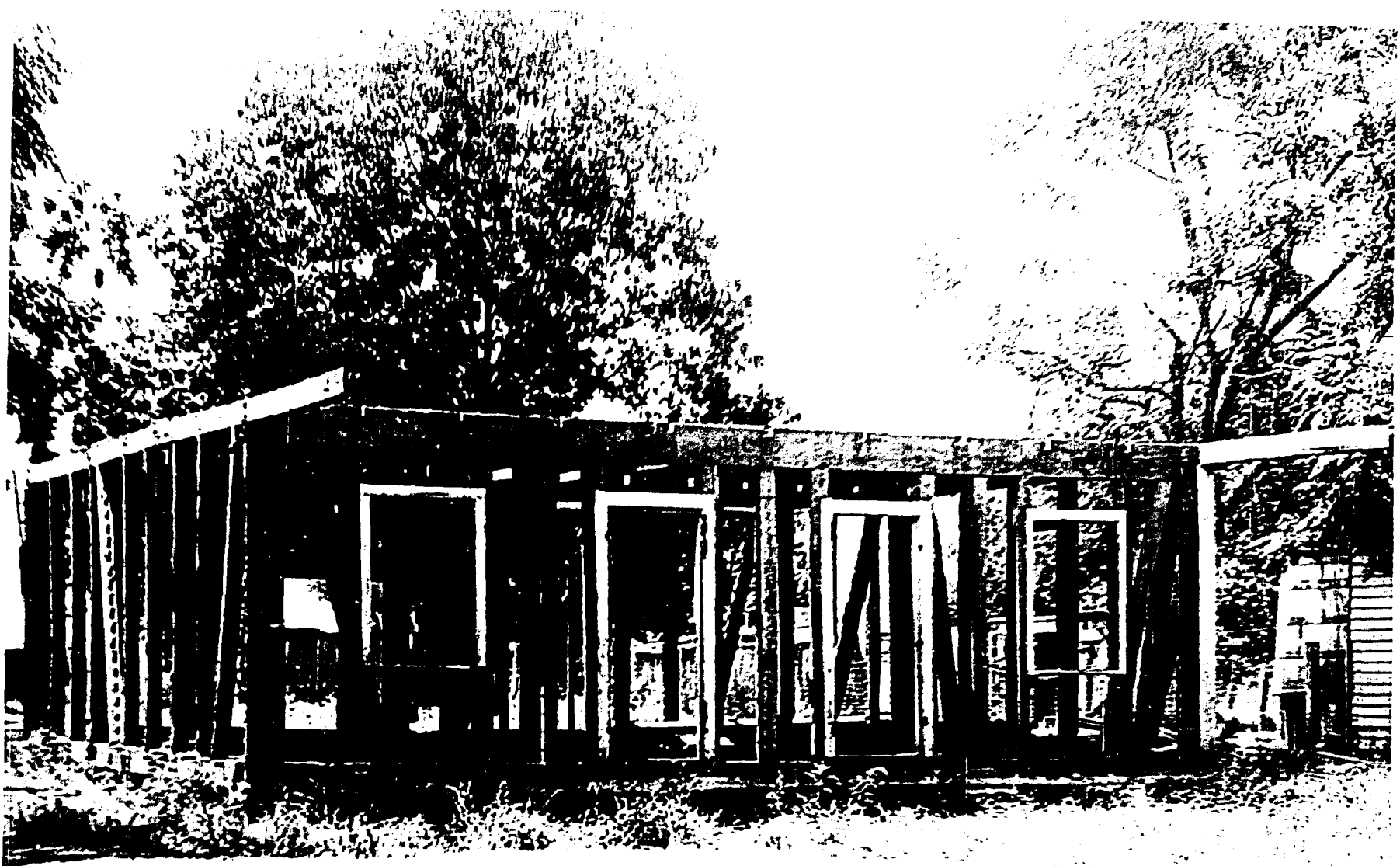
holder; the planter had abundant labor and often his own carpenters, joiners, and artisans.

The oldest half-timbered houses in Louisiana are built on the ground, i.e., without piers. The Rocque House and Yucca House are of this type. A single layer of brick covering the ground serves as the foundation. In the Rocque House there are no floor joists but only sills which support the wall studs. The brick has been removed from the floor for other uses, so now the house has an earth floor. In Yucca House there are floor joists which are covered with planking. The brick foundation extends to make the porch floor in front and back, and the porch supports rest on the bricks. The porch of the Rocque House seems never to have had a brick floor, and the posts which support the galerie are set in a sill on the ground. These features are exceptions for extant houses, but surely must represent rather common practices at the time of their building. Other houses are built on short piers, about two feet high, of sections of cypress log or brick.

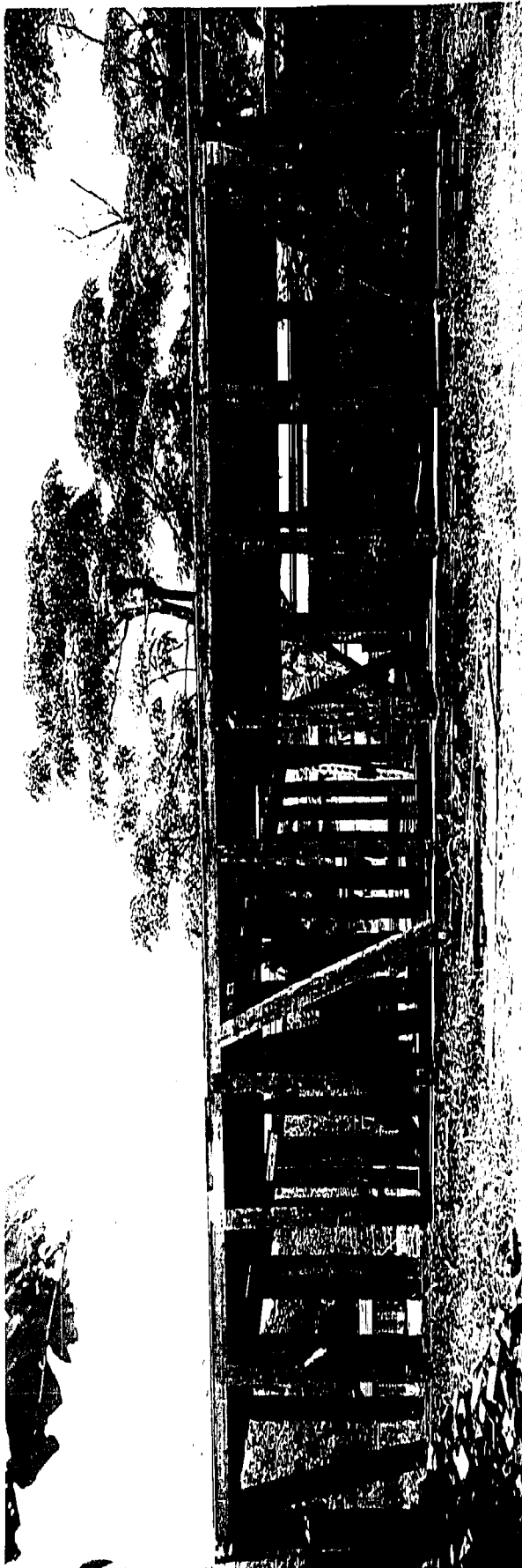
The main part of the frame was called the carré (Pls. 48 and 49). This was usually the only heavy timbered part. Any additional half-story or roof framing was not done in full timbers. The entire frame was joined without nails or spikes (Pl. 50). The main pieces of the carré were numbered or marked so that after removal to the building site they could be assembled properly. The markings were made in Roman numerals on the outside of the sills beginning with the numeral one for the position of the left front corner post. Each numeral marked the position for a piece of studding which was marked accordingly. The numbers ran consecutively along the left side of the house, across



Yucca House: An Example of Early Creole Planter Architecture



The Carre of a Half-timbered Creole House (front)



The Carré of a Half-timbered Creole House (side)

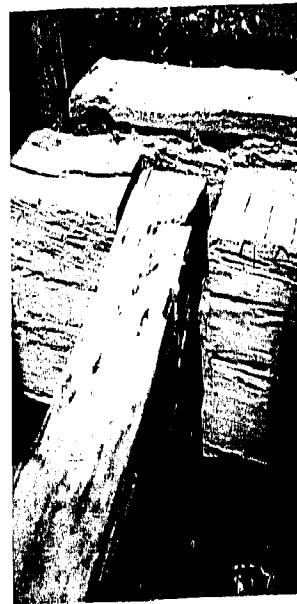


Fig. a. Floor Joist and Sill



Fig. b. Joint of Median Partition



Fig. c. Scarf Joint on Principal Ceiling Joist

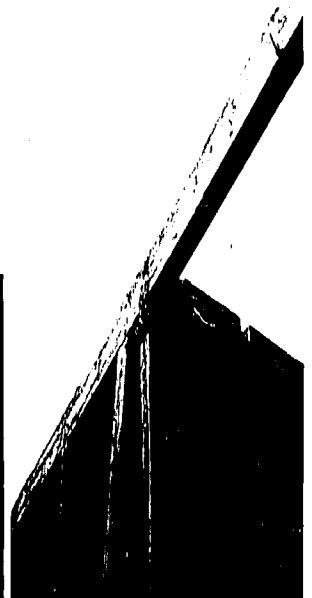


Fig. d. Front Corner Post and Principal Ceiling Joist With Extension for Galerie

the back sill, up the right side, and then across the front.<sup>31</sup> The spacing of studs, ceiling and floor joists, and diagonal braces was irregular. In general, the older the house, the less regular was the spacing.

The earliest example, the Rocque House, does not even have the same number of studs on corresponding sides, and spacing of studs varies more than a foot. The timbers are rough hewn; the surfaces are covered with axe marks. The sizes of sills, studs, and joists are not uniform; there are differences of as much as two inches in the sizes of studs. Lengths had to be more accurate. In this house, sills measure about 6 x 12 inches, corner posts measure 4 x 10 inches to 6 x 10 inches. Ceiling and porch-roof joists measure about 4 x 8 inches. The carre of Yucca House is constructed with more regularity. Later houses have more uniformity in size and spacing of timbers. The timbers are more carefully hewn and some are even sawn.

After the carre had been framed, it was filled with nogging. The materials used were either mud or brick; brick in the city houses, mud in the country houses. The brick-and-wood construction was known as brique entre poteaux (brick between posts), and the mud construction was called bousillage (patois = bouzier). In the brick construction nothing else was needed; the bricks could be filled between the studding and braces. If a house was to be filled with mud, additional preparation was necessary. Only the carre was so constructed; the half-story and gables were not filled.

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<sup>31</sup>This must have been the common practice, for DuPratz (op. cit., p. 182) notes that houses were exported to the Indies "all framed and marked out, ready to set up."

A carre was prepared for a mud filling by being fitted with small scantlings between the studs and braces. These pieces, called barreaux, were riven bars about 1 to 1½ inches in diameter and of varying length depending upon the spacing between studs and diagonals. The spacing of the barreaux was between 4 and 6 inches. They were mortised in place, and the studs into which they were mortised were usually prepared for this when the timbers were being made. An auger hole held one end of a bar. The other end was held by a chase mortise, an auger hole with a slot leading into it. A single stud was used for only one kind of mortise on one side; the two kinds of mortises were not alternated within one panel.

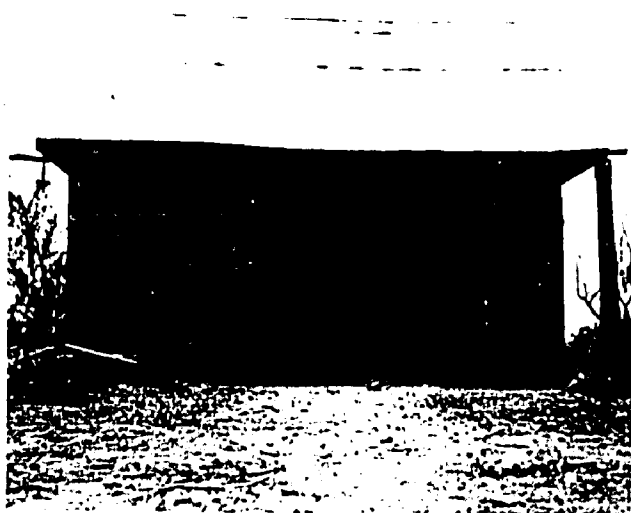
The mud with which the framework was filled had to be especially prepared. A pit was dug near the building site into which was put the earth and water. Spanish moss was added for tempering.<sup>32</sup> Clam shells were burned for lime which was also added. All of these ingredients were worked to the proper consistency by treading. Large chunks were extracted and shaped like an inverted "U." These pieces were called "cats" or "clay cats." They were draped over the barreaux beginning with the lowest. They were matted into thicknesses equal to the width of the walls, about four inches, and gradually built up to the ceiling. The mud was smoothed as well as possible on the inside and allowed to harden. When it had hardened, it became almost like plaster, and was whitewashed on the inside. See Plates 51 through 54 for details.

The extant dwellings are covered on the sides and back by weather-boarding, beveled planks overlapped in a horizontal position and secured

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<sup>32</sup>DuPratz, op. cit., p. 232. This was done by the first settlers.

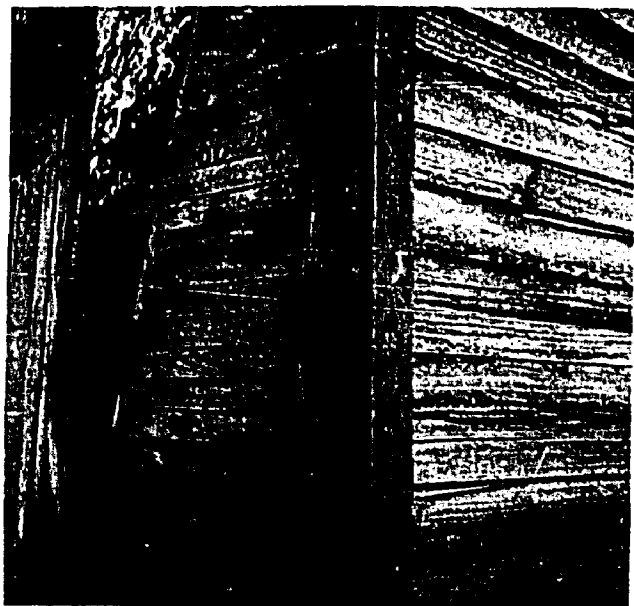




Isle Brevelle



Isle Brevelle

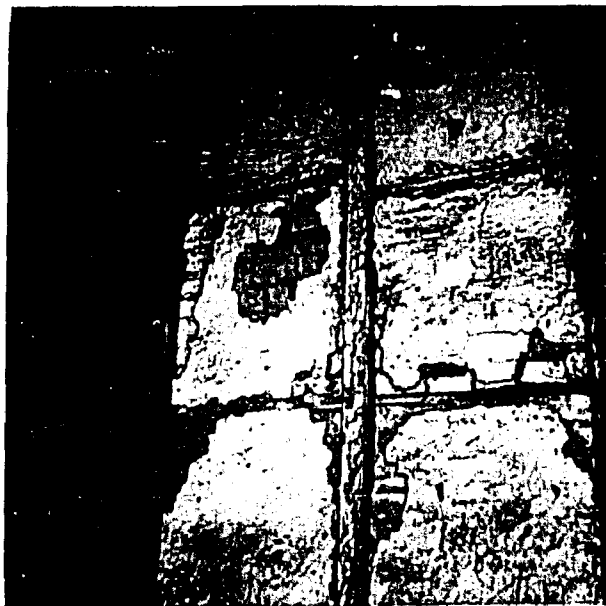
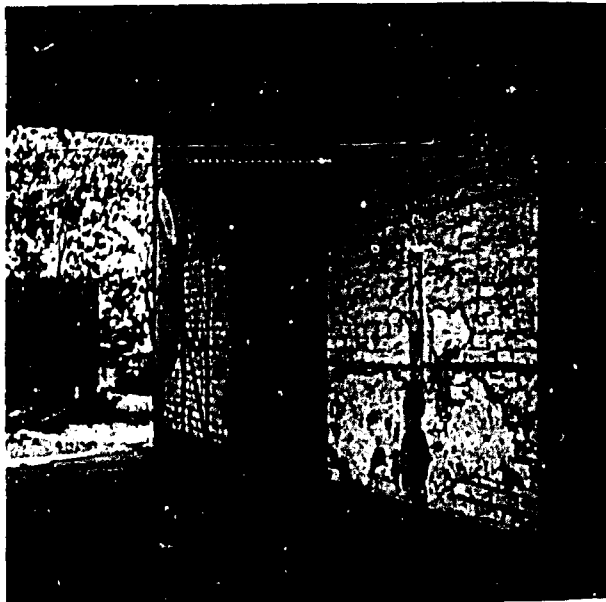


Isle Brevelle



Bayou Teche

Mud Filling in Half-timbered Construction



Near McCall

Brick Nogging in Half-timbered Construction

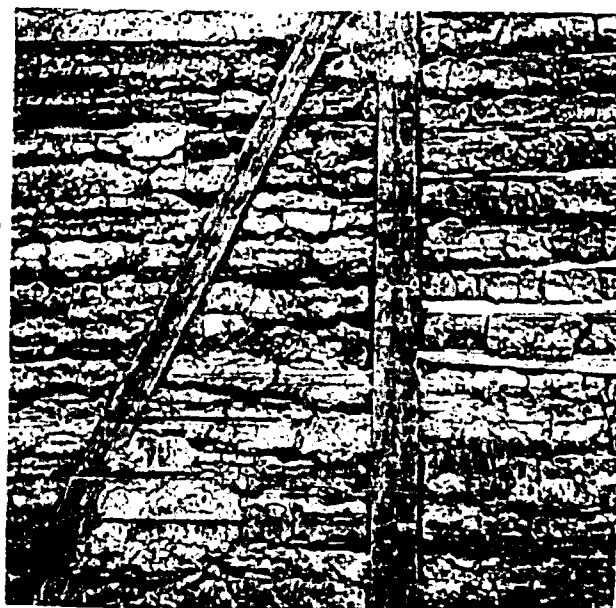


Thibodaux

Fig. a. Studs and Diagonals



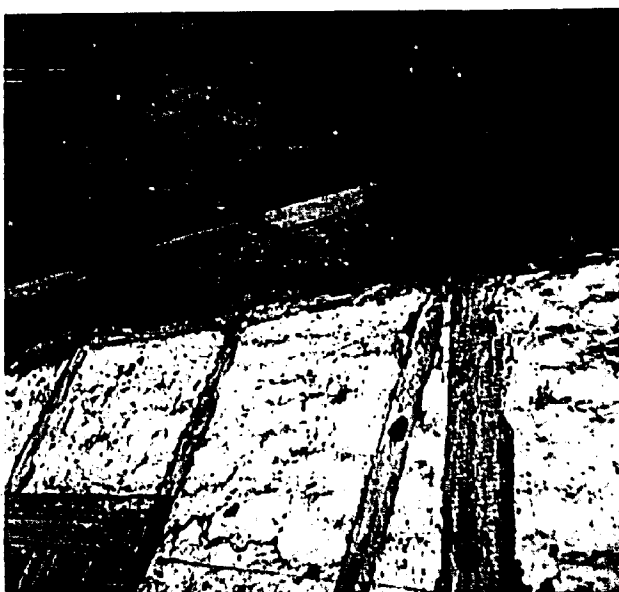
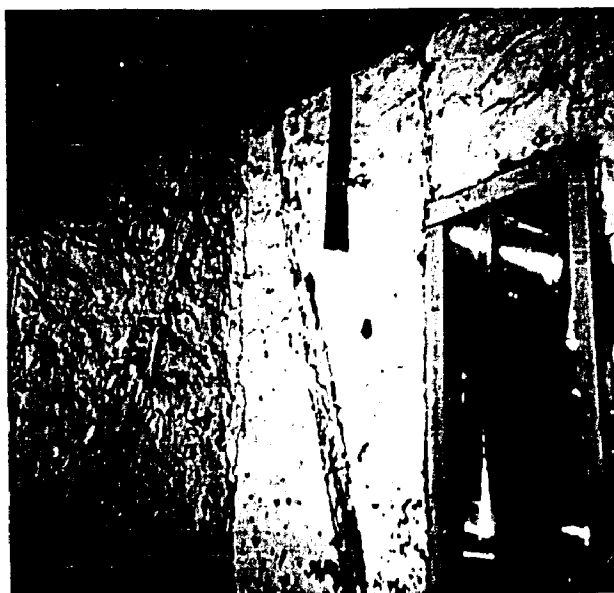
Fig. b. A Mud-filled Carre



Near Labadieville

Fig. c. Mud Filling

Half-timbered Construction



Near Labadieville

Half-timbered Construction: Interior Walls

by wrought-iron nails. The original roofs were made of riven cypress shingles. Only the façade beneath the galerie roof was left uncovered. A covering was unnecessary because the roof provided sufficient protection against rain washing over the mud plaster. The façade was whitewashed like the interior of the house. This practice has been one of the most persistent survivals. It has been carried over to the all-wood Creole house and even to other types, where it has no functional basis. In this survival lies the explanation of the "hood" (Pls. 55 and 56).

Different kinds of covering were used in the earliest days. Thatch of some kind was certainly used for roofing and may have been used on walls. Bark was used for both roofing and siding. Transitional stages are represented by houses with shingled gables and clapboarded carre, like the Rocque House. The arrangement of shingles on gables is reminiscent of palmetto thatch. In a short time the shingled roof became standard for the half-timbered house.

The manner of preparing shingles was simple and required few tools. The practice has not been abandoned more than twenty to thirty years. Sections of cypress log the length of a shingle, about two feet, were obtained. A section of log was called a "block." It was split into six equal wedge-shaped pieces; these were "bolts." The shingles were riven off the bolts with a couteau pieu (froes).

#### Evolution of the Creole House

The entire complex of Creole architecture evolved gradually through an orderly sequence of methods and materials of construction and refinements of detail. Early construction was considerably hampered by the lack of tools and materials. Methods and styles of



Head of Island



Head of Island

Hoods on Creole Houses



New River Near Acy



Near Whitehall



Near Welsh

Hoods on Creole Houses

the homeland had to be adapted to frontier conditions and materials which the region offered. Conditions which prevailed in the major settlements are only a clue to what frontier conditions were.

The tools essential to house construction were few and simple. Those absolutely necessary for the most elementary construction were the broadaxe and adze, and except for certain shortages at the establishment of the earliest settlements, these tools were generally available. Construction with the axe alone was probably possible, but other tools were needed. In a letter of 1713, from Fort Louis de la Mobile just eleven years after its founding, a request is made for building materials. The list includes all kinds of ship nails, axes for carpentry, adzes, pickaxes, and panes of glass.<sup>33</sup> The ship nails were undoubtedly used in building construction. Pickaxes served the purpose of a plow, for neither that tool, nor the animals to pull it, were available for some years in the colony. Requests were made for improvements in tools especially suited to local needs. In a letter from Governor Perier to the directors of the Company of the Indies in 1728 from New Orleans it is stated: "We are sending you models of the sort of pickaxes and axes that we have have for use in this country, as well as models of shingle-nails, the last that you sent us being too large. We need some lath-nails."<sup>34</sup> The country had to provide the building materials, but there were some things it could not provide, nails and glass. These seem to have been a problem. Governor Perier

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<sup>33</sup>Rowland, op. cit., Vol. 2; pp. 143-157.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 1605.



protests to the directors of the company in a letter from New Orleans.  
in 1729:

"Those who have written to you that such a great waste of nails is taking place here and that the workmen steal half of them ought to have paid attention to warning us about it. That would have been to write to the company more usefully because we should have had an investigation made of it and those who would have been caught in it would have been punished so severely that they would not have exposed themselves to it again, but we have never heard that mentioned, and certainly we saw for ourselves the bad quality of those that were tested before us."<sup>35</sup>

In a letter of 1727, Perier requests glass panes for windows, because "Every six months we have to change the linen cloths that are put on the windows because they rot and the company is at a much greater expense for them."<sup>36</sup> The problem of shingle nails was caused by the fact that wooden shingles were a colonial innovation and no nails had been developed for them.

Shortages or deficiencies in tools or materials for the planter could not have been great for long. In the inventory and documents relating to the sale of Chaouachas Plantation near English Turn, dated January 24, 1733, there is a list of tools and materials of great length and detail. The list includes these items pertinent to house construction: whipsaws, crosscut saws, pitsaws (scies de long), nails (clous), screws, sheets of tin, jointers (velopes), jointer's clamps (sergens a enuisier), floater knives (couteaux flotier), broadaxes (besaignes), iron mould for making nails (cloutiere), notchers

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 639-640.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 558.

(jabloines), pegs (chevilles), and cases of window panes.<sup>37</sup> The list does not include the couteau pieu or froe which must have been necessary for the making of shingles and other riven bordage. None of the requests for tools from the colony to directors includes this tool. The question is whether the tool was known at that time or whether the French later borrowed it from the Anglo-Americans. In France riven wooden shingles were not used. The technique as practiced not long ago in French Louisiana was identical to that in the north of the state.

The most abundant building material which the land around the colony had to offer was wood. The exclusive use of wood for building was unknown, and the manufacture of timbers and planks a problem. The simple hand-power method of pitsawing planks was not productive enough, and early attempts were made to establish sawmills. Two sources of power were available, animals and rivers, and both were used. The rivers could be used only for a short time during the year, at flood stage, when water could be directed over the levee in a flume. A mill on a small stream near Fort Louis was in operation in 1718. The chief engineer of the colony was directed to examine it and determine its production, which information was to be used in the building of New Orleans.<sup>38</sup> By 1729 a sawmill was in operation on the Mississippi River,

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<sup>37</sup>Cruzat, Heloise H., "Documents Concerning the Sale of Chaouachas Plantation in Louisiana, 1737-38," La. Hist. Quart., VIII (1925), 597-646.

<sup>38</sup>Dart, Sally, "French Incertitude in 1718 as to a Site for New Orleans," La. Hist. Quart., XV (1932), 37-43. Translation of "Instructions for Mr. Perrier, Chief Engineer of Louisiana, April 14, 1718" in Margry, Vol. 5, p. 599.

but it could be used for only four months out of the year at the most.<sup>39</sup> Horse-powered mills were the most satisfactory because they could be operated the year round.

The directors of the colony were actually more concerned with the export trade than the needs of the colony, and that intention was behind most of the efforts to build mills. Only a few years after Fort Louis de la Mobile had been in existence cypress planks entered the West Indian trade in small amounts. Most of these were provided by the voyageurs.<sup>40</sup> By 1723 the directors of the company believed it to be on a sound enough basis to begin the production of some commodities, among which planks were specified.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the difficult task of starting a wilderness farm, the inhabitants were expected to produce rice and tobacco and saw planks for export.

Stone was preferred as the material for the company buildings, and the directors ordered that a search be made for suitable building stone and stone for making lime in the lands around the colony.<sup>42</sup> The quest was doomed from the start unless the stone was to be brought from great distances. Some was found near Mobile and its use was proposed in 1713, but never accomplished.<sup>43</sup> Stone buildings came much later and were limited to company and public buildings. Stone had to be imported or it came as ballast in ships. Building in stone was not done by the

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<sup>39</sup>Roland, op. cit., p. 627.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 81.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>42</sup>Dart, Sally, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>43</sup>Roland, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 165.

habitant and planter.

Bricks were the substitute for stone. These were available from nearly the beginning. Fort Louis de la Mobile had a kiln by 1704, only two years after its founding.<sup>44</sup> The bricks as well as the mortar were made from local materials. Mortar was made by burning oyster shells for lime and mixing it with sand. The first bricks were so poor that they didn't last five years. The company had its own brickyard near New Orleans in 1726, but for a few years could not supply the demand.<sup>45</sup> Brick had to be supplied from France until the company could get its kiln to working. By 1728 the company had furnished the colony with brickmakers and masons, and Negroes were being trained in those crafts.<sup>46</sup> At that time building was done only in brick by the company in Louisiana. Brick was used in the country houses only for nogging. In the older buildings of this kind still existing the bricks are seen to be quite sort and would probably have worn quickly if they had been completely exposed.

Something may be learned of the nature of the earliest construction from a census of Louisiana taken August 13, 1704. The entire colony consisted of the Fort Louis de la Mobile settlement, which was then only two years old. The buildings of the king are described as follows:

"A house sixty-eight feet long by sixteen wide of one story of dressed timber laid piece on piece with a roof of framework covered with shingles and a gallery from one end to the other on the side of the river.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 165, 655-656.

<sup>46</sup>Dart, Sally, op. cit., p. 43.

"A store house forty feet long by sixteen wide covered with shingles.

"Another house serving as a church, sixty-two feet long by sixteen wide of framework covered with shingles.

"A guard-house forty feet long by sixteen wide of one story covered with shingles and of framework, two-thirds serving as a storeroom for arms and ammunition.

"A shop for the forge in the town covered with palmetto leaves which are a kind of leaf as broad as a fan.

"A shop for gunsmithing in the town with the same covering as above for the forge.

"A little shop of pikes standing on end in the town that serves for the laying-up of barks and other small vessels."<sup>47</sup>

The description of the main house seems to indicate log construction or something very much like the Anglo-American log cabin. If so, it is a rare instance of such a structure in French colonial Louisiana. Such a departure from the usual mode of construction is difficult to account for. Log cabin construction could not likely have been known to the French colonists.

It is possible that some of the early wattlework dwellings were erected in the Creole form. In a report by Swanton on the Houma there is a figure of a Houma dwelling (Pl. 57) which is neither Indian nor French.<sup>48</sup> The form of the house is simple gable Creole. The construction is horizontal poles filled with mud, on piers, roof and gable sides covered with palmetto. All Indian wattlework consisted of poles in the ground, never horizontal and never on piers. It is not likely

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<sup>47</sup>Roland, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 19-20.

<sup>48</sup>Swanton, "The Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley," Pl. 13, Fig. b.



(J. R. Swanton)

An Early Wattlework Creole House

that the house is unique. It is also not likely that such a house was built exclusively by the Indians. The method and materials are those of the camp or shotgun house, the form is Creole. Such a house may have appeared early in the formative period of Creole dwellings, even before they were created in framed work. A house of horizontal poles and wattlework, without piers, and with a galerie might have been one kind of "hut" to which early writers so frequently referred.

The earliest kind of house in the main stream of evolution was one of posts in the ground very much like the English palisade construction. It was the progenitor of half-timber construction in the French colony as it was in Europe, and it must have resembled that kind of medieval construction in Europe. The evolution of palisade construction into half-timber construction which took place in the French colony seems to have been very much like that which occurred in the English colonies, but in a much shorter time.

Palisade construction consists of posts or timbers driven into the ground one against the next. Upon this a roof of framework may be constructed. The early dwellings of "stakes" or "piles," or "posts in the ground" were of this type. In 1716 Governor Cadillac wrote: "On Dauphin Island there are only fourteen poor huts of stakes, a guard house and a prison, all of them covered with reeds . . ."<sup>49</sup> The vertical timbers in the ground may have been posts, stakes, round or squared logs, depending on the care taken in building. The simplest type would have been maison de pieux en terre. The maison de poteaux en terre was probably a more carefully constructed house. If the timbers were placed in contact

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<sup>49</sup>Roland, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 220.

with one another, or nearly so, then the construction would be true palisade construction like that of the English colonies and presumably the first step in the evolution of half-timbering. A few examples of this kind of construction still exist in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri.<sup>50</sup>

Collombage was a second and slightly superior kind of pioneer construction. It consisted of posts in the ground, or posts on a sill, separated by spaces which were filled with wattle-daub. If of posts in the ground, it was very much like the puncheon-and-wattle-daub construction of the English colonies. Maison de poteaux en terre may have been either collombage or palisade construction, probably more often the former. None of these houses remains in French Louisiana. In Illinois there are a few examples: the Old Church of the Holy Family and the old Courthouse in Cahokia.<sup>51</sup>

Most all of the construction of the early decades of the French colony in Louisiana that was not temporary was the collombage type, even to the plantation houses.<sup>52</sup> Even though the name might imply

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<sup>50</sup> Missouri, W.P.A. Guide, pp. 276-280.

<sup>51</sup> Illinois, W.P.A. Guide, p. 493.

<sup>52</sup> Cruzat, Helen H., "Documents Concerning Bienville's Lands," La. Hist. Quart., X (1928), pp. 87-110, 209-232, 463-465.

Dart, Henry P., "Cabildo Archives - French Period. The First Charity Hospital for the Poor of New Orleans," La. Hist. Quart. IV (1922), pp. 361-366.

Price, Edith Dart, "Inventory of the Estate of Sieur Jean Baptiste Prevost, Deceased Agent of the Company of the Indies. July 13, 1769," La. Hist. Quart., IX (1926), pp. 411-498.

Cruzat, Heloise, "Documents Concerning Sale of Chaouachas Plantation in Louisiana, 1737-38," La. Hist. Quart. VIII (1925), pp. 597-646.

Kernion, George C.H., "Reminiscences of the Chevallier Bernard de Verges, an Early Colonial Engineer of Louisiana," La. Hist. Quart. VII (1924), pp. 56-86.

Prichard, Walter, "Inventory of the Paris Duvernay Concession in Louisiana, 1726," La. Hist. Quart., XXI (1938) pp. 979-997.



great size and refinement, the plantation houses were very simple affairs. Colonial architecture entered the stage of framing with houses known as maison sur solle and collombage sur un sollage. A maison sur solle required some kind of framing, for sills were necessary even though they were laid directly on the ground. Collombage construction may or may not have had a foundation. If it had none, it had to be some kind of maison de poteaux en terre. If it had a foundation it was a maison sur un sollage (house on a foundation), and it also had to be framed. The foundation may have been either piers or a platform of bricks.

A fundamental difference in these early types of construction is in the matter of framing. Early distinctions between houses of posts in the ground and houses on the ground were undoubtedly distinctions between houses which were not framed and those which were. The post--in-the-ground house gave way to the framed house within three decades after the founding of the colony. The walls of the earliest framed houses were filled with wattle-daub, but that was soon replaced by barreaux-and-mud work or briquelette entre poteaux. Mud filling was used in the average country house and bricks in the city houses and better country houses. A pioneer dwelling like the Rocque House must have been standard for the agricultural habitant by about 1730. The planter starting with the same primitive base retained the general Creole house form, but early added refinements. Lath and plaster ended the half--timbered stage in the planter-class dwelling at an early date.

The earliest kinds of roofing were reeds, cypress bark, and palmetto. Reeds were not as satisfactory as bark or palmetto. DuPratz says that there was an extravagant use of cypress for this purpose, but the timber

was sawed into planks for export.<sup>53</sup> Palmetto was the most widely used material, probably for the reasons that it was more easily obtained and could be secured without nails. An advantage in all these materials was that a heavy, framed roof was not necessary to support them. Some kind of pole construction could have been used, as on the palmetto houses. The roofing techniques for the two might have been very similar. Shingles of cypress wood became the standard roofing for the Creole house at the end of the frontier period.

It is certainly possible that some early dwellings were entirely covered with bark or palmetto. It is unlikely that bousillage work was often left exposed to rainwash, yet DuPratz says: "The first settlers to Louisiana used only mud walls for their houses, . . ."<sup>54</sup> Clapboards were not available until sawmills were in operation and then not in the pioneer fringe or settlement. The sawmills mainly provided planks for export. The pioneer had to saw his own clapboards and as at first saws were scarce, houses "covered with bark" or "covered with palmettos" might indeed have meant sides as well as roof.

Although a galerie has been noted for one of the earliest buildings, it may not have been a standard feature of the poteaux-en-terre houses. But these houses disappeared early and the galerie was an integral part of the framed house of collombage construction from the very first. It has been suggested that the galerie is a "West Indian" influence and so might have been originally Spanish.<sup>55</sup> The gallery is an important

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<sup>53</sup>DuPratz, op. cit., p. 217.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>55</sup>Smith, J.F., op. cit., p. 153.

feature of dwellings in the West Indies, where it is older. The gallery is also an outstanding feature throughout the southeastern United States, and in this case it is difficult to suggest an origin, other than that it is a spontaneous regional development. The galerie of Louisiana Creole architecture greatly resembles that of the West Indies, but it appeared so early in Louisiana and contact with the West Indies was at that time so slight, that it seems more likely that the galerie is endemic rather than introduced.

Another important development in the evolution of the Creole house was the addition of a high foundation. At first, houses were built directly on the ground, the ground itself serving as the floor of the house in some cases. Later houses were built with the sills resting on a layer of brick, as is illustrated by Yucca House. This method lasted for several decades while some houses were being built on piers of cypress logs, or on bricks. In some plantation houses the piers were made almost a story tall. This was followed by ground-floor basements of brick. An inventory of a plantation at Bayou Goula in 1726 indicates that a framed house was built on a platform beneath which was the kitchen at ground level.<sup>56</sup> This practice with variations became common for all large country dwellings: in general, the plantation houses. The purpose was to protect the building from high water and to keep it cooler. The many houses which have this feature are called "raised basement houses" today. The planter-class house was about out of the half-timbered stage when raised basements became common. Magnolia Mound in Baton Rouge is an example of a half-timbered house on a raised basement. The raised basement was not used by the petit habitant.

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<sup>56</sup> Prichard, "Inventory of the Paris Duvernay Concession," p. 986.

Following the rapid developments of the formative period, the half-timbered house became almost standardized even in details for the small-holder rural habitant. The typical house was gabled, one story and attic high, had a wide galerie across the front, but not the sides, and was elevated on piers of brick or on cypress logs not more than two feet high. The roof was covered with hand-riven cypress shingles, the sides and back of the mud-filled carré were covered with clapboards, the gable ends with either clapboards or shingles, and the facade beneath the galerie roof was left uncovered, but the mud was whitewashed. The entire inside of the house was whitewashed or left plain. The house was two rooms wide and the separating wall was constructed of frame and mud like the outside walls. This wall held the hearth and chimney; the hearth had a fireplace opening into each room. Window shutters and doors were of batten.

This kind of dwelling was built throughout French Louisiana by the agricultural people. It was the pioneer dwelling, the counterpart of the Anglo-American log cabin. The description of St. Martinville, then about 100 houses, given by Cathcart in 1819, would have applied to any settled bayou.

"Some few houses are in part built of brick brique entre poteaux, but mostly of Mud, & many of the old wealthy inhabitants retain their original shed, with very little improvement to cover them.

"The houses which are built of Mud, is mix'd with moss, with which every tree is nearly cover'd, it is put up by hand, without the use of the trowel, on shelves places sic from one frame to the other, & becomes very hard & strong, when thoroughly dry, some plaster over, some white wash only, & the poorer class leave them in their original state, owing to the scarcity of lime, their only resource being to bring clam shells from the Sea shore to make it or; their doors and joiners work are done in the crudest manner, & few houses of the last description have any glass in their

windows, in the whole extent of this country which we have visited, neither is there a single stone of any description .."<sup>58</sup>

Half-timbered construction was continued until well after the Civil War. Samuel Lockett, who toured the state widely and wrote in 1873, never failed to mention the unique character of the dwellings in the French country. At that time the French settlement in Natchitoches Parish must have been identical with the bayou country of the south, for Lockett says:

"The Cane River country is probably the finest part of the alluvial tract. It is almost entirely settled up by descendants of the early French pioneers, of pure and mixed breed, and presents in consequence many peculiarities. The farms are generally not very large. The houses are small and of that peculiar construction seen nowhere except among the French population of Louisiana. They are wooden frames, filled in with mud, with narrow fronts, high sharp roofs, .."<sup>59</sup>

#### The All-Wood Creole House

The practice of half-timbering was abandoned rather rapidly around 1880 by the petit habitant and much earlier by wealthier classes. Although this was an important change in building methods, it changed the appearance of the house only slightly, and the form none at all. It meant only that the walls were no longer filled with mud or brick, as the case might be. This required board finish for the front exterior wall and all of the interior walls, because the mud or brick of the half-timbered house often served as the finished wall in those places. The methods of framing the house were not changed; only the barreaux were omitted for they were no longer needed. The method of joining

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<sup>58</sup>Prichard, et. al., "Southern Louisiana and Southern Alabama in 1819: The Journal of James Leander Cathcart," La. Hist. Quart., XXVIII (1945), 735-921, ref. cit. pp. 825-826.

<sup>59</sup>Lockett, op. cit., p. 133.

timbers by means of a mortise and tenon was replaced by the use of nails sometime shortly after the half-timbering was abandoned. Some extant houses are framed with heavy timbers joined by mortises and tenons but are not half-timbered. This is especially true of the larger, more expensive houses of the large-holder farmer and planter.

The frame Creole house is still predominant in many places in French Louisiana. The center of distribution is the Mississippi flood plain from Avoy<sup>el</sup>les Parish to the south. It extends eastward along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Typical houses of the more expensive kind occur in numbers along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and Alabama into Florida. Bayou Teche marks the western limit of the main mass, but most of the bayous and towns as far as Lake Charles have good examples of the Creole house. They extend up the Red River Valley to Natchitoches, where there are a good number in both town and country. This is about the northernmost limit; there are a few toward and in Shreveport. This house is rare in the Mississippi Valley north of Marksville.

As with the earliest half-timbered Creole houses, there are two basic forms; the gabled house and the hip-roof house. The pyramidal--roof Creole house is not common and is a variety of the hip-roof house. These two kinds of houses are associated with a division of economy to a rather remarkable degree. The gabled house belongs to the small holder, especially the farmer, and it is the common dwelling in the towns. It is therefore by far the more numerous.

Although some plantation houses are large and refined gabled houses, the hip-roof house is the typical dwelling of the planter. It is almost absent in the small-farm country and is most numerous in the plantation

country along the Mississippi River south of Baton Rouge, especially on the left-bank river road. The plan of the house is fundamentally the same as the gabled house, for the two had the same simple beginnings. The only difference at first was the shape of the roof, which appears to be a development related to the increase in size. Undoubtedly, beauty was considered. A large gabled house appears to have as much roof as body.

The hip-roof houses are generally well finished. They are painted all around, always white. The interiors are finished in lath and plaster. The front walls are seldom different from the rest, indicating early abandonment of the mud- or brick-façade trait. Floor plans are about the same as those of the common Creole house with the exception that a width of over two rooms is more common; a few have five rooms. Usually each front room has a French door leading to the galerie. Some of these houses have a central hallway whose entrance is never a French door. French windows, those which extend from the floor almost to the ceiling, are very common. Doors and windows generally have green double lattice shutters. Most of these houses are one story, but the attic is used for living space and most all have dormer windows. These houses seldom have appendages. The separate kitchen of early times was introduced into the house rather than being added as an appendage. A back galerie is common, and sometimes the house is completely surrounded by galeries. If there are two stories, there are galeries for both floors.

An important feature of these houses is the raised basement, which is a foundation eight to ten feet high. For the houses that have this feature the main living elevation becomes the second story, but it is

never thought of as the second floor. It is reached by wide stairs on the outside which lead to the center of the galerie. The foundation is of several types from simple brick pillars on the ground with no floor and open to the outside, sometimes enclosed with lattice-work or shielded with shrubbery, to partial or complete enclosure with walls and floors of brick. The true raised basement is enclosed and fitted with doors and windows. This basement might be left unfinished and used as a storeroom, or finished and used for living space, in which case its most common function is that of kitchen and second dining room. Plates 58 and 59 illustrate different kinds of hip-roof Creole houses.

The gabled Creole house is the dwelling of French Louisiana in country and town except where the camp and shotgun houses have always been important and where the bungalow is becoming important. The bayou settlements where changes have been slow consist of miles of these houses. Some plantations have one-room versions of this house for the quarter houses and a large and refined example for the "big house." The contrasts are wide in size, improvement and general appearance, but the form is unmistakably the same (Pl. 60). It is between these two extremes that the common Creole house reaches its most typical development.

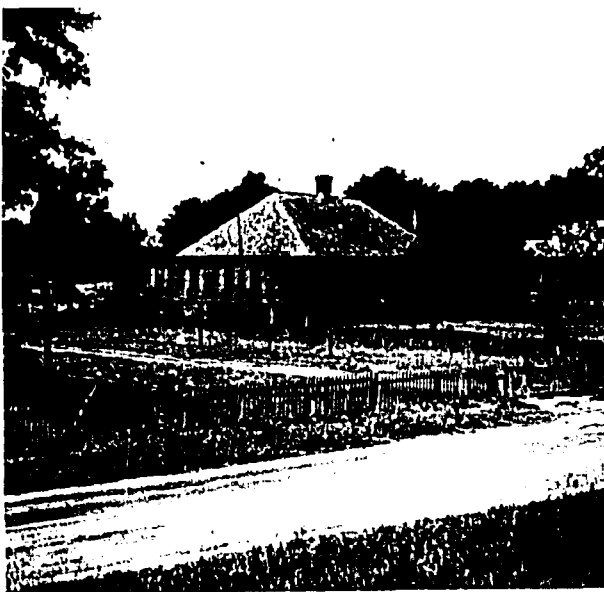
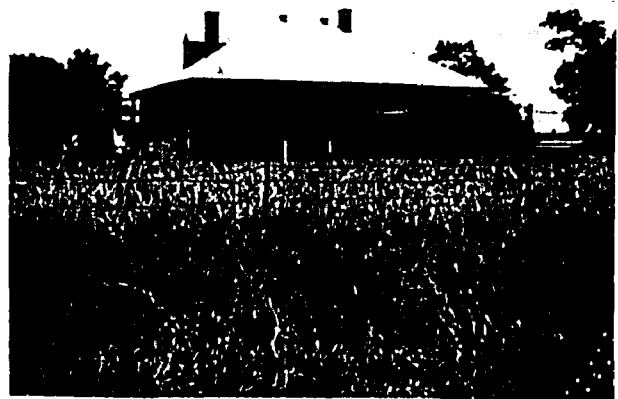
The basic form of the common Creole house is rectangular. The kitchen-dining-room unit is the only appendage which alters the rectangularity of the building. The manner of attaching this unit is the only means whereby a variation of form may be created. Even though the kitchen has been built with the house, it has the distinct appearance of having been attached to the body of the house. This fact has a real basis in the evolution of the house. In the earliest days the kitchen





Mississippi River Right Bank Below Donaldsonville

Examples of the Hip-roof Creole House



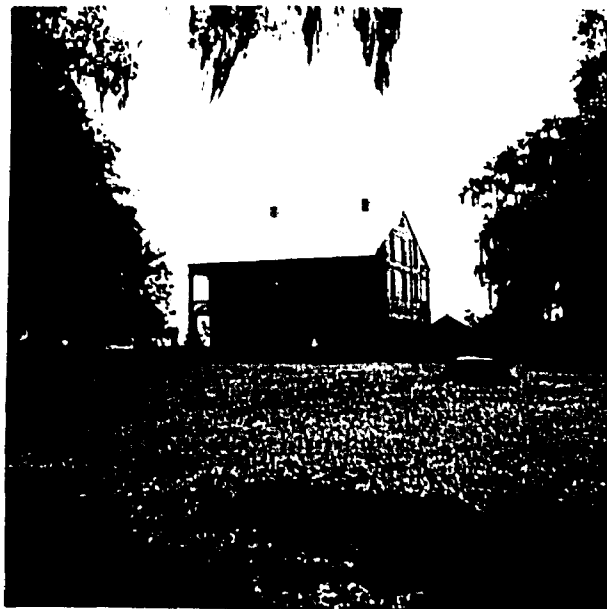
Mississippi River Right Bank Below Donaldsonville

Examples of the Hip-roof Creole House



Prairieville

Fig. a. A Single-room Gabled Creole House



Near McCall

Fig b. A Planter Class Gabled Creole House  
With A Raised Basement

Size Contrasts in Creole Houses

occupied a separate building. The reasons for this seem to have been to protect the main house from the danger of fire and also the desirability of keeping the heat of the kitchen from the living quarters. Whatever the original reasons were, the practice was established as a trait (Pls. 61 and 62).

The form of the kitchen unit was like either a Creole house or a camp. This fact would make some difference in the manner of attachment, especially in the case of the porch of the kitchen unit if it was the Creole type. In the evolutionary process of attachment, the kitchens were built as before but simply fixed to some part of the body of the house. All stages in this process can be found today, from the kitchen which is completely separate or connected only by a platform walk, to many kinds of complete attachment. The kitchen units are attached to the back or side of the house with the porch oriented in a number of different ways (Pls. 63 through 70). The materials of construction often set the appendage apart from the rest of the house.

The simplest arrangement for a kitchen, other than a room in the main house, consists of a shed-roof room which usually runs the length of the building in the back (Pl. 63). It is usually constructed of board and batten which would distinguish it from the rest of a house finished with clapboards.

A kitchen appendage with a Creole-house form is attached in a variety of ways. This type is associated with the intermediate and larger houses. The appendage is generally smaller than the main house and therefore has a lower roof. It may be oriented like the main house and placed directly behind it, in which case the porch of the kitchen becomes an "alleyway" which may be open from one side of the house to



Bayou Bonfuca



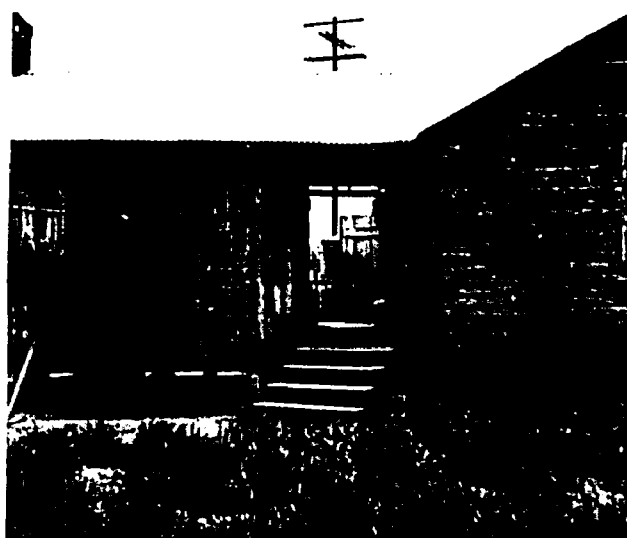
Bayou Lafourche Near Lafourche

Creole House Appendages: Separate Creole Kitchen



St. John the Baptist Parish

Fig. a. Separate Camp Kitchen



Erwinville

Fig. b. Attached Camp Kitchen with Alleyway

Types of Creole House Appendages



Bayou Du Large



Bayou Pointe au Chien



Near Plaquemine

Types of Creole House Appendages: Shed-roof Kitchen

the other (Pl. 64). The profile suggests the capital letter "M." It is sometimes located back to back so that the kitchen galerie becomes the back porch (Pl. 65, Fig. a). The kitchen appendage is also placed in a side location with the porch to the front. The back wall is usually matched with the back wall of the house so that the galerie of the kitchen is offset to the back of the main galerie (Pl. 66, Fig. a). Sometimes the galerie is continuous from house to kitchen. The side location is the least common and occurs mostly in the western part of French Louisiana.

Attachments to the back of the house are most common. For some small or narrow houses the kitchen is as wide as the house and matches on both sides. Generally, the kitchen is smaller, so it does not fully occupy the back wall of the house. In that case it is placed to one side making the very common "L" appendage (Pls. 67 and 68), or it is located in the center for the equally common "T" appendage (Pls. 69 and 70). This is done with both camp and Creole-form kitchens. In all locations the gable end of the kitchen appendage is placed against the back wall of the house with the gable left as such or joined into the house. The galerie of the Creole-form kitchen faces either left or right sides of the house. In the L-appendage it either faces the outside where the edge of the galerie matches the side of the house, or it faces the inside of the "L" where it may be joined with a galerie or shed porch on the back of the main house. The T-appendage often has a galerie on both sides. Both kinds may have a shed porch on the back of the kitchen. Camp-kitchen appendages are without galeries, or have only shed porches.

The plan or room arrangement of the Creole house is remarkable for its simplicity. The formula is so standardized that the floor plan of





Near Whitehall

Fig. a. Normal "M" Creole Kitchen with Alleyway



Bayou Du Large

Fig. b. Normal "M" Creole Kitchen with Closed Porch

Types of Creole House Appendages



Bayou Du Large

Fig. a. Reverse "M" Creole Kitchen



Bayou L'Ourse

Fig. b. An "M" Camp Kitchen

Types of Creole House Appendages



Head of Island

Fig. a. Creole Kitchen: Side-back Location



Lebeau

Fig. b. Camp Kitchen: Side-front Location

Types of Creole House Appendages



St. James Parish

Fig. a. L-appendage Open Creole Kitchen



Bayou Du Large

Fig. b. L-appendage Closed Creole Kitchen

Types of Creole House Appendages



Head of Island

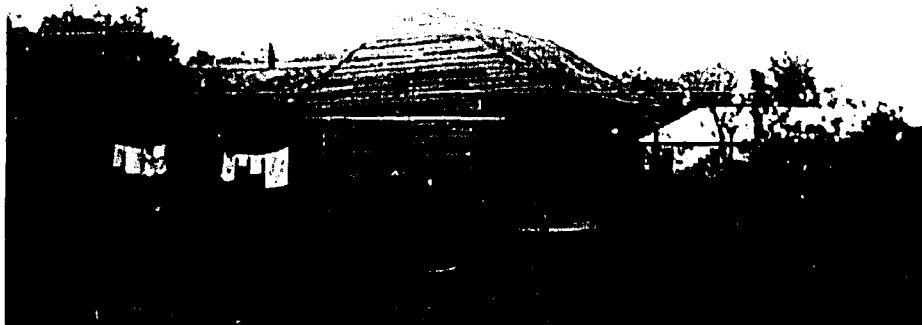
Fig. a. L-appendage Open Camp Kitchen



Bayou L'Ourse

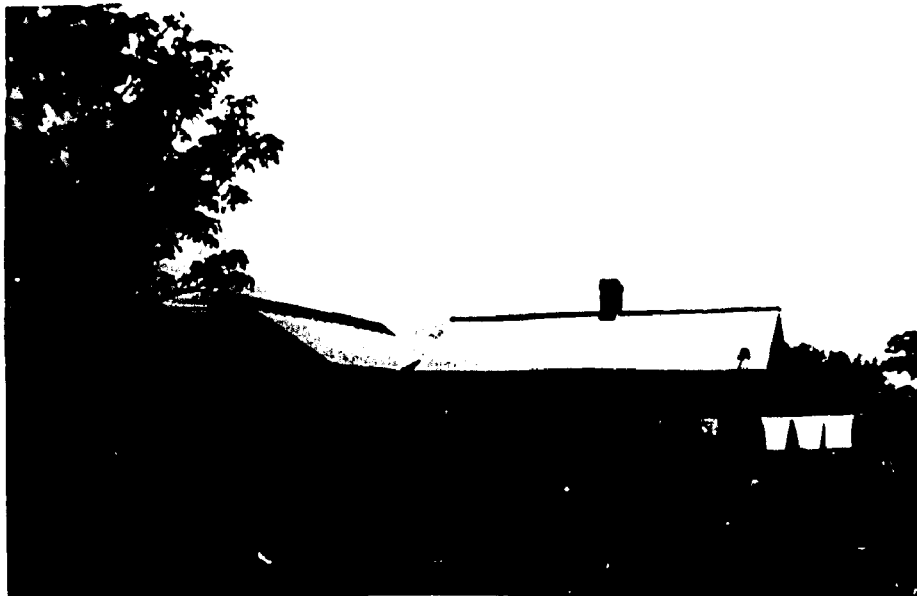
Fig. b. L-appendage Closed Camp Kitchen

Types of Creole House Appendages



Near St. Amant

Creole House Appendages: T-appendage Creole Kitchen



Bayou L'Ourse

Fig. a. T-appendage Open Camp Kitchen



Bayou L'Ourse

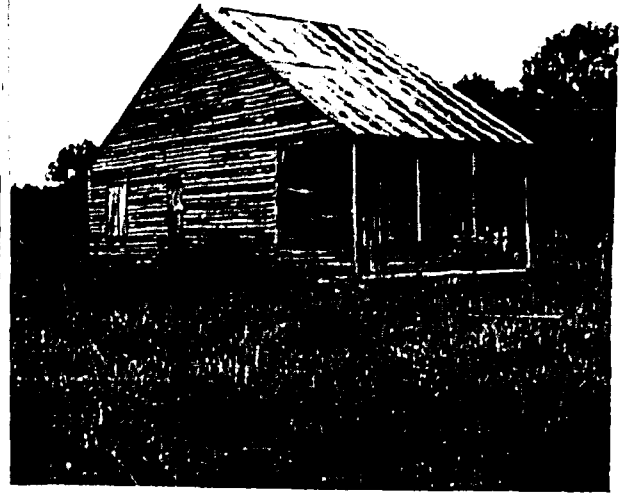
Fig. b. T-appendage Closed Camp Kitchen

Types of Creole House Appendages

almost any house can be determined from the exterior appearance. Even the placing of doors and windows follow a number of distinct plans, rather than individualistic arrangements. There is a small number of basic floor plans to which the different door, window, and chimney locations are applied. In these different types, there can be seen the manner in which the large house has grown from the small. The original house consisted of a single room. This trait may be considered to reach as far back as the first houses of stakes in the ground. The single-room Creole house (Pl. 71) has a single front door, a chimney in a side wall, and only a front galerie. Such a house is rare today, but it represents the beginning of all Creole houses, including the large hip-roof plantation mansions. By the additions of identical units to the side and back of the first unit, larger and larger houses were built. No departures were made from this method so that the main part of the Creole house possesses almost perfect bilateral symmetry. Even the kitchen, when at first separate and later attached, was most often the same kind of unit. Only the manner of adding this appendage offsets the symmetry of the entire house.

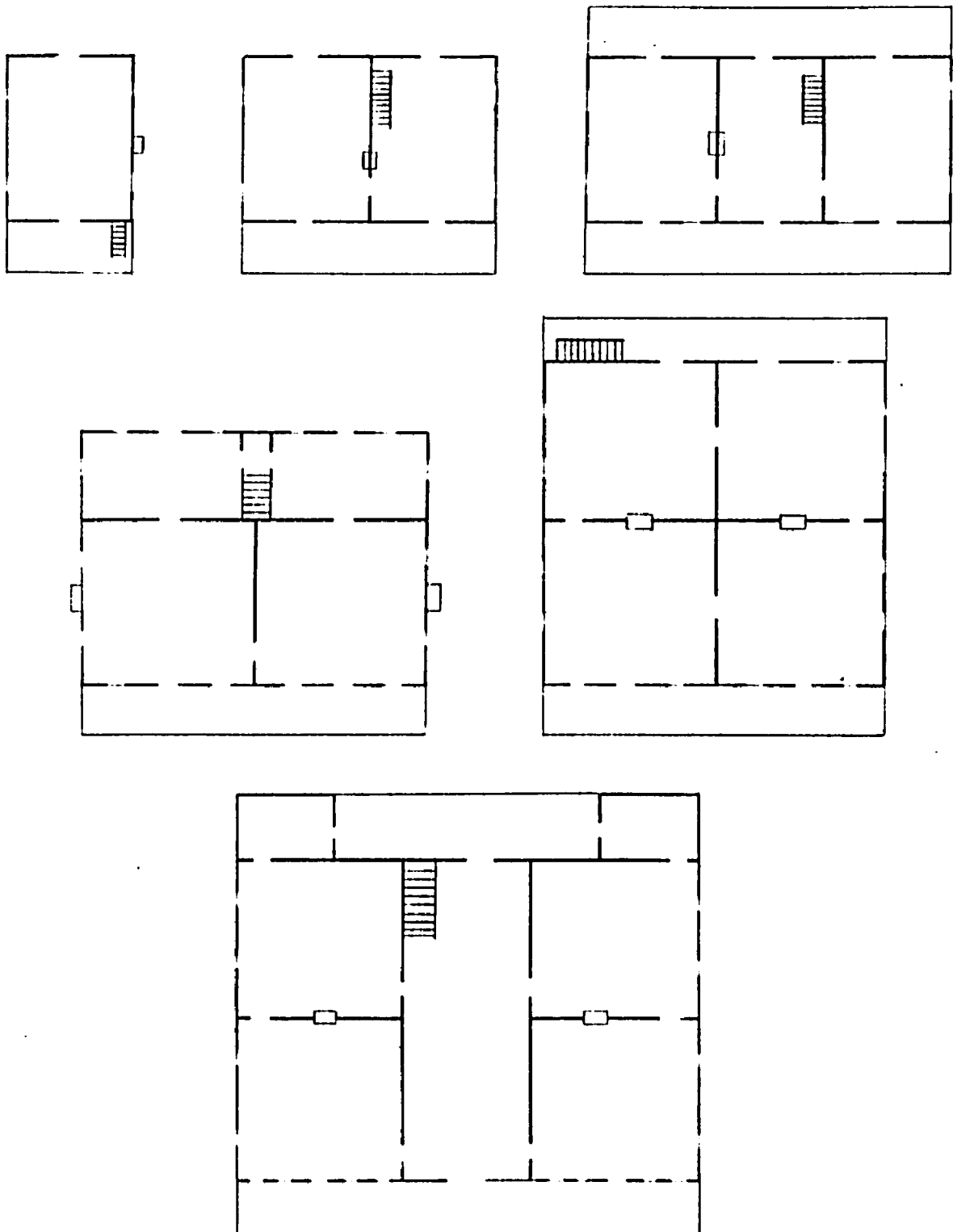
The various stages in the evolutionary development are given in Plate 72. Each of these plans represent a basic type of Creole house, from which the evolutionary sequence is easily inferred. The next stage after the single-room house was the addition of another unit side by side with the first. This was perhaps the most important step, for it established the lateral orientation, rather than a dorsal one as in the case of the camp and shotgun houses. This was predetermined because of the galerie and roof ridge. The two-room-wide Creole house is by far the predominant type. In its simplest form it is only one room deep.





Prairieville

An Elementary Creole House



EVOLUTION OF THE CREOLE HOUSE

Each room has a front door. The double or multiple front doors seem to be a feature inherent in the evolutionary growth.<sup>60</sup> It is not a matter of just two front doors, there are always as many doors as there are front rooms. A three-room-wide house is not uncommon and there are some four and five rooms wide. The next larger houses are made by half-room additions to the back.

Another distinct type is two rooms wide and two rooms deep. This is about the average large-sized house, with an appendage. The normal limit in size is a house three rooms wide and two deep with an appendage.

One exceptional feature in this scheme is the central hall. It is associated with the larger houses; they are two rooms wide and either one and a half or two rooms deep. The rooms of such a house are larger than those of an ordinary two-room-wide house. The hall is always distinguished on the outside by a door which is larger and may have side lights, panels, or is different in some other way, if there are front doors to the rooms. This kind of house sometimes has only the one front door, which is a rare case among Creole houses. The central hall is of interest because it does not seem to belong to Creole architecture. It occurs often enough, but still does not seem to be typical. It is quite unusual in the smaller houses, and is distinctly in the large--farm-and-plantation category. For these reasons it seems to be an

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<sup>60</sup> The proximity of the same trait in the Anglo-American folk architecture around French Louisiana would seem to indicate that the trait had diffused into the Creole architecture, but the two front doors were built in the early half-timbered houses, long before the log cabin tradition could have exerted its influence. It is interesting that the two front doors are characteristic of the French Huguenot dwellings of the low country of the Carolinas. Waterman, T.T., The Dwellings of Colonial America, (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1950), pp. 31-41.

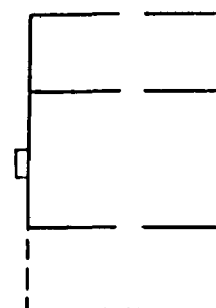
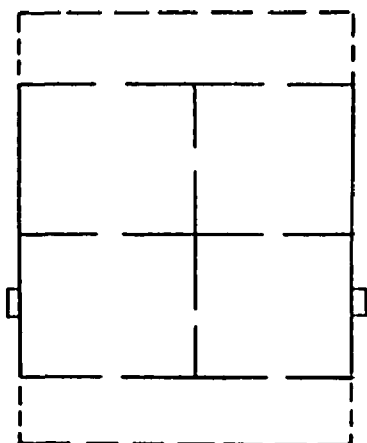
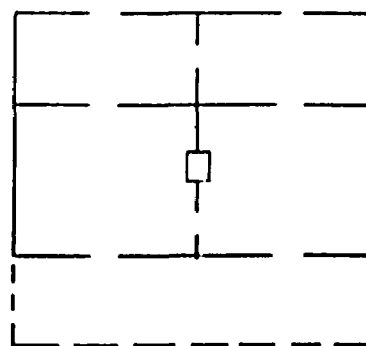
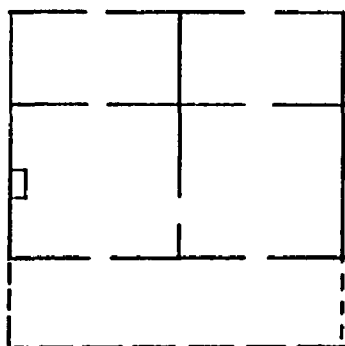
introduction restricted to the wealthier classes. There is little likelihood of an indigenous creation in a fashion similar to the development of the same feature in the southern English colonies,<sup>61</sup> for Creole building did not lend itself to such a development. It is significant that the door for the central hall in the Creole houses generally has the typical Georgian detail, side lights, and fanlights, which are quite foreign to Creole architecture.

The few basic floor plans are varied by the placing of interior doors, windows, and chimneys. All of the standard plans are given in Plates 73 through 77. The chimney has a number of characteristic locations, but these have little relationship with age or type of floor plan. The single-room house has an exterior chimney on a side wall. The simple two-room-wide house generally has the chimney in the center wall so that the hearth opens into each room. Large two-room--wide houses generally have two gable end chimneys, if they are only one or one and a half rooms deep. A house which is two rooms deep has two chimneys, one in each wall between the front and back rooms. Houses with the central hall have chimneys on each side of the hall. These arrangements are so standard that the positions of the chimneys as seen from the outside of the house is enough to reveal the floor plan.

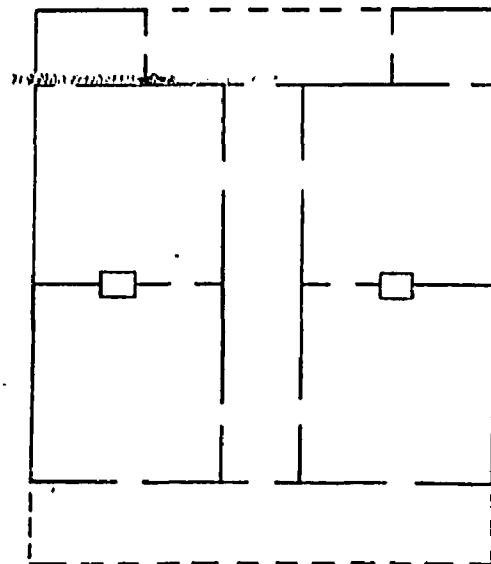
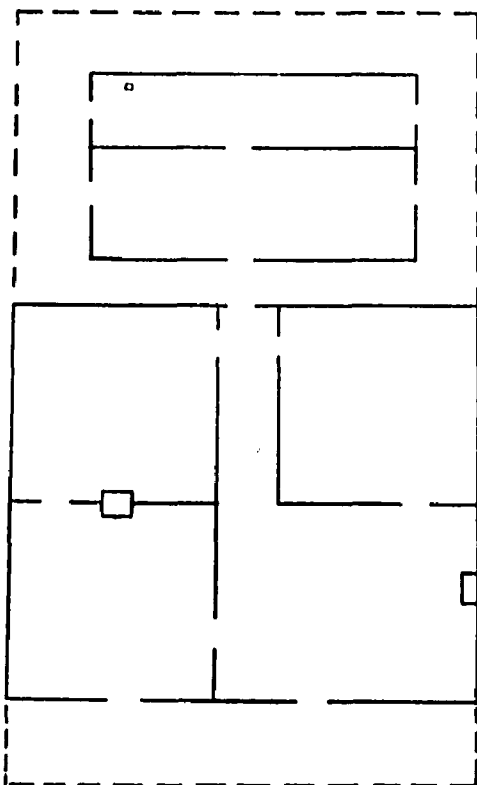
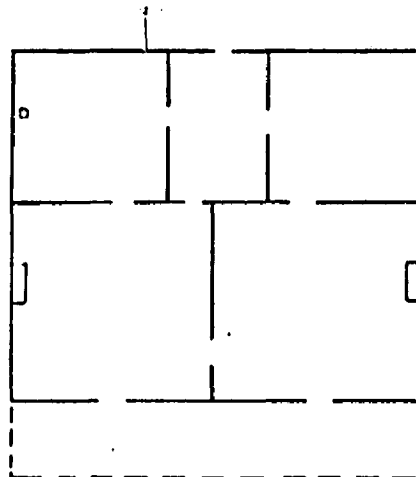
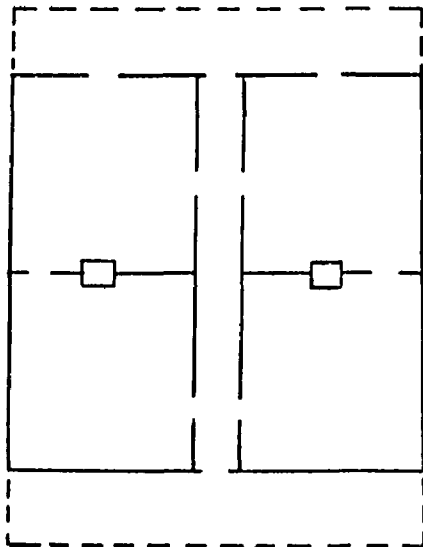
The usual exterior of the common Creole house is either clapboard or board and batten (Pls. 78 and 79). Clapboarding is by far the most common everywhere. It is considered to have a better appearance and is preferred over board and batten. Only the poorer houses are finished in board and batten. Quite often the kitchen appendage of a clapboarded

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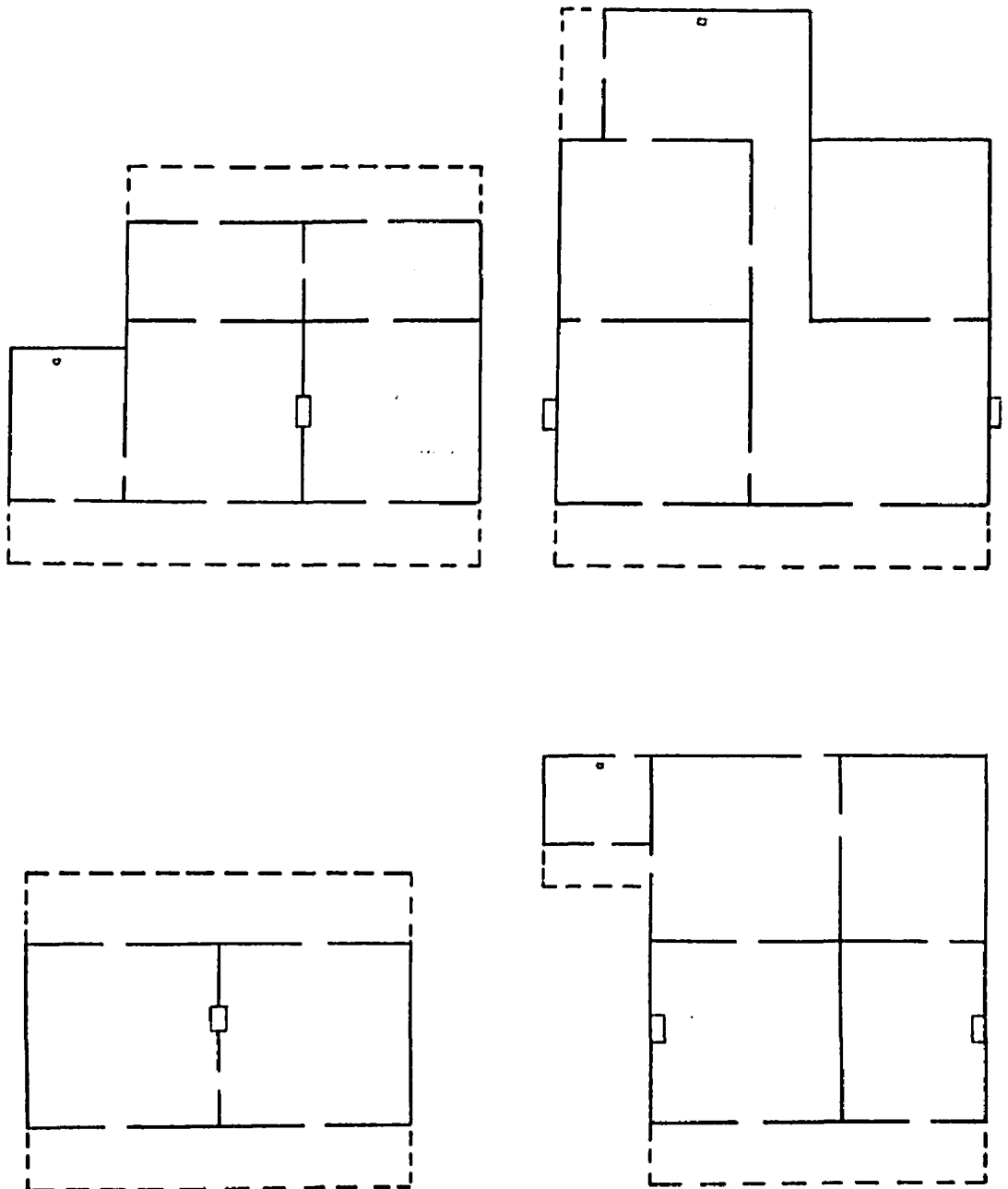
<sup>61</sup>Forman, op. cit., p. 47.



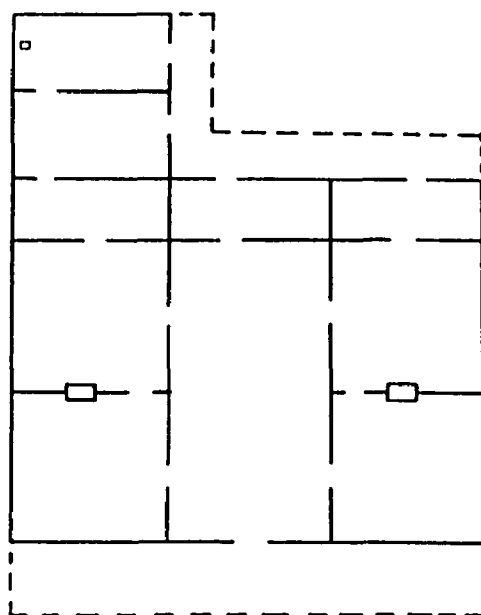
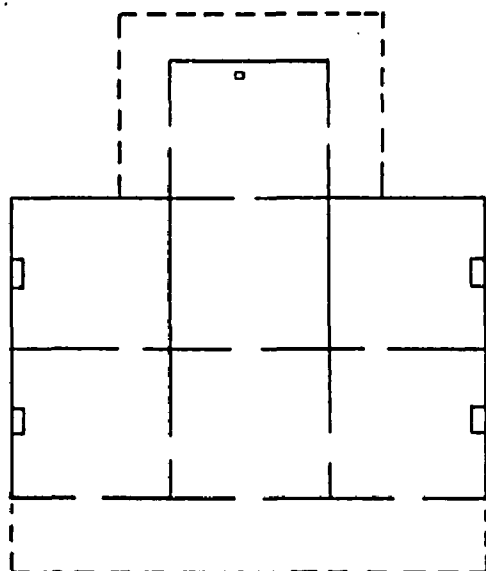
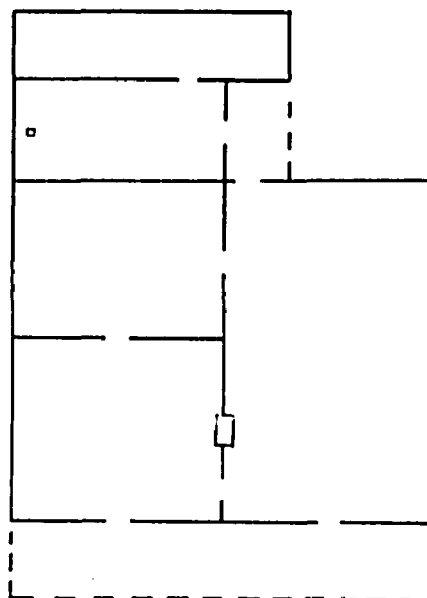
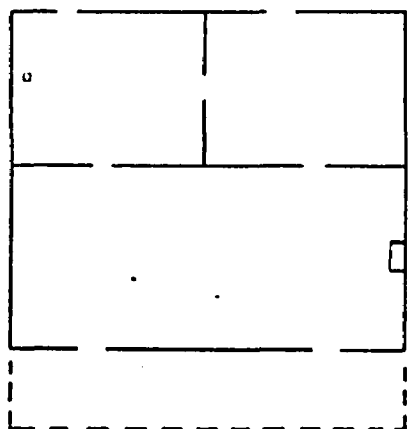
CREOLE HOUSE FLOOR PLANS



CREOLE HOUSE FLOOR PLANS

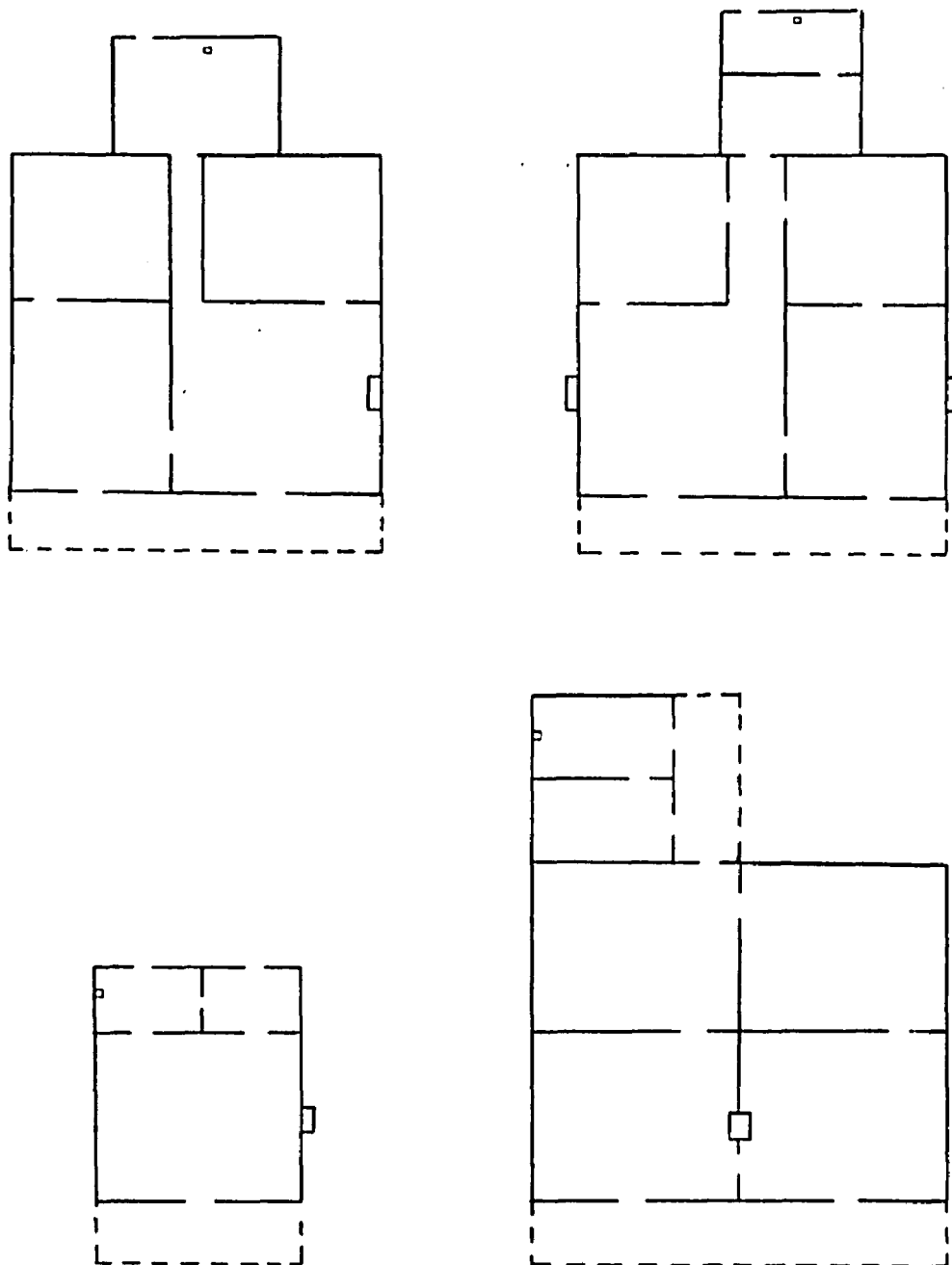


CREOLE HOUSE FLOOR PLANS



CREOLE HOUSE FLOOR PLANS





CREOLE HOUSE FLOOR PLANS



Bayou Pointe au Chien



Bruy St. Martin

Creole Houses of Board-and-batten Construction



Bruly St. Martin



Near Wallace

Creole Houses of Clapboard Construction

house is covered with board and batten. An occasional house is covered with some kind of shiplap. Very rarely is a house painted; if so, it has been done in modern times since the painted bungalow has set the example. All of these houses have the same appearance of bleached, gray, rain-washed cypress.

Sometimes the gables are covered in a different way from the rest of the house. Houses with a board-and-batten body may have clapboard gables. A few houses have gables covered with shingles. The traditional roofing is riven cypress shingles, but not one in twenty houses still has such a roof. The shingle roof is being replaced by the corrugated, galvanized iron, or so-called "tin" roof.

The galerie never extends down the sides of the dwelling. The exterior front wall beneath the galerie roof is usually finished differently from all the others. This is due to the fact that this wall was the only part of the frame construction which was left exposed in the half-timbered houses, and the bousillage was whitewashed. In the all-wood houses the façade was no longer of mud, but the board wall was painted or whitewashed as of old (Plate 80). This trait has been one of the most persistent survivals of the half-timbered stage. It is not so striking today because the paint or whitewash has worn off or become dull on many houses, and if painting is done anymore on these houses, the whole house is painted. There are enough "white fronts" left to indicate how widespread this trait once was. The façades are also distinguished in other ways. The kind of boarding is often different from that used on the rest of the house. A board-and-batten house may have a clapboard façade. The clapboarded house often has a facade of shiplap or drop siding. There are a few rare, widely



St. James Parish



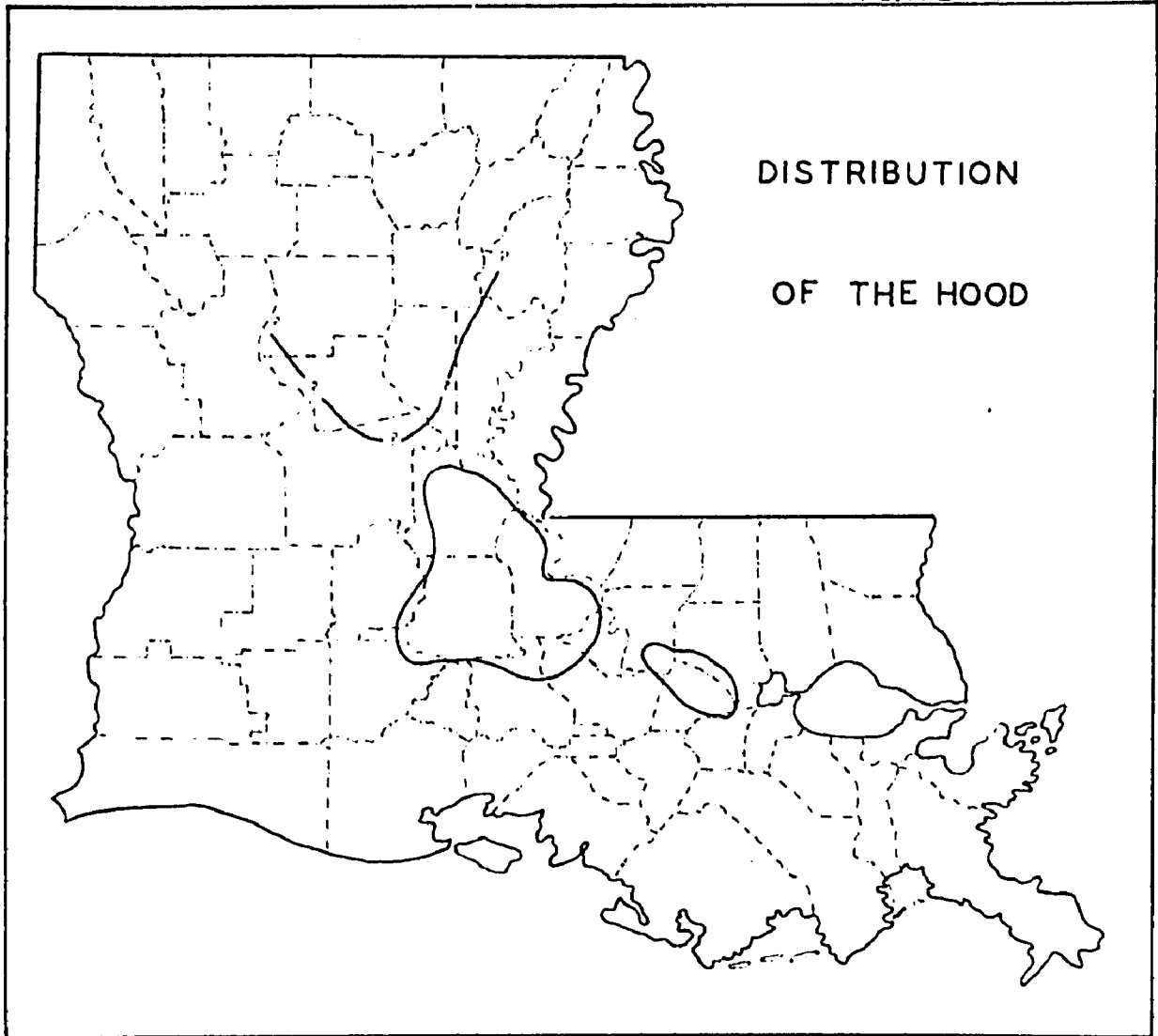
St. James Parish

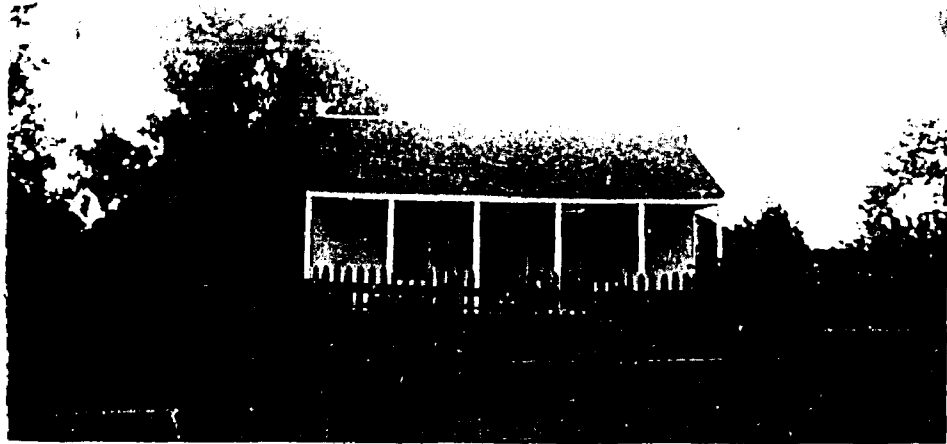
Creole Houses with Painted Front Walls

scattered cases of façades covered with cypress shingles. It is unlikely that this mode was ever very important, but it must have been more than an extreme variation. It is possibly quite old. Those houses which are entirely painted often have a front of a different color than the rest of the house.

The false gallery is an extension of the gallery roof two or three feet beyond the gallery on the front and sides (Pls. 55 and 56). The French names for this structure are fausse galerie and abavent; the English terms are "apron" and "hood." It is not especially common even in the area of its main occurrence. One core area is in Ascension Parish away from the Mississippi and adjacent parts of Livingston Parish. The next area of less concentration includes Pointe Coupee, Avoyelles, St. Landry and Evangeline parishes. Outside of these areas it is very infrequent and in the bayou section of the southeast it is almost absent. It occurs on half-timbered houses but not often enough to lead to the conclusion that it was a typical feature of those houses. It seems to have been an added protection for the mud façade and was transposed to the all-wood dwellings. The odd distribution (Pl. 81) might be interpreted as either the result of rather localized preferences or a diffusion of the trait from Anglo-American Louisiana. It occurs there on "open-passage" house derivatives.

The door and window finishings are of several kinds. Batten doors and shutters are characteristic of the smaller houses (Pl. 83). Larger dwellings have panel doors and glass windows in sashes, but without cords and weights. The common Creole house rarely has French doors or windows. These are typical only of the two-room-deep gable houses and hip-roof houses. This is true of the double green lattice shutters as well.





St. Amant



Head of Island

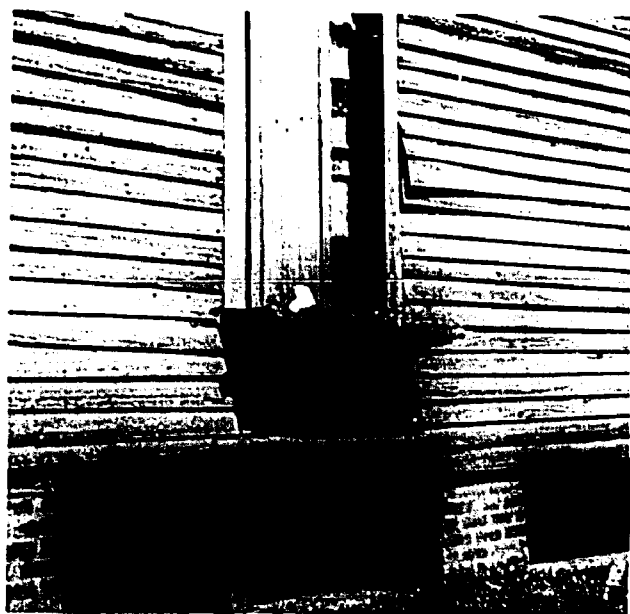
Creole House Details: Chimney Locations





Bayou Bonfuca

Fig. a. Batten Shutters



Near McCall



Near McCall

Fig. b. Tablette

Fig. c. Tablette and Cistern

Creole House Details

The high roof of the Creole house provides a usable attic. The common house generally does not have dormer windows for the attic is too small to be used for living space. The larger houses, especially the two-room-deep variety and the central-hall type, typically have dormer windows on the front as well as the back, for the attic is fitted out as a second story. Even in the smallest houses there are stairs to the attic, as it is used for storage and temporary living space. The stairs are generally located in the back rooms. Most stairs are simple, straight and steep, almost like a ladder, for little space can be given to something which is not used frequently. A rather unusual location for the stairs is the front galerie, where they run like a ladder to a trap door (Pl. 85). This again seems to be a space economy. It is found only on the smaller houses where the attic is too small to be used for anything but storage. Some informants tell of times when harvests were stored in the attic.

These houses are disappearing at a fairly rapid rate. All of them are over forty years old and even cypress will deteriorate if not protected. The well preserved house of the plantation, large farm, or town and city will long outlast the common country house. When such a house is replaced, a more economical and "modern" house is built. The reasons offered for the change by the people are that the Creole house costs too much and takes too much material to build for the space it provides. The high roof and attic are considered a waste now. Although these facts are important considerations, perhaps an explanation that carries a strong implication is that these are "old-timey" houses. Their merits are still much appreciated by those who possess one which is in good condition. The material and workmanship



Bayou Du Large



Near Luling



Near Plaquemine

Creole House Details: Dormer Windows



Near Opelousas



Near Lebeau

Creole House Details: Outside Stairs

are prized though the style may not be. If one of the old houses is "broken" to build a new one, often enough material is salvaged to build a good part of the new house. The sound cypress planks and heavy timbers, though often between fifty and a hundred years old, are more highly valued than any new lumber which can be bought.

### Bungalows

There are several kinds of dwellings not indigenous to French Louisiana which are of interest because of their numbers or extra--regional associations. They are important because they alter the typical regional patterns. The "bungalow" is the principal outsider. It has come into wide acceptance since about 1910. It was not numerous then, but the idea of change dates from that time. The source of the diffusion is the surrounding Anglo-American country. There it is the principal common house type, following the log cabin and its frame derivatives in point of time. The regional name for this house is "bungalow" and it is widespread throughout the southeastern United States.

The bungalow is well known by that name in French Louisiana, which would be the case of an introduced trait. It is recognized as being more economical and practical than the Creole house, and it is considered to be "modern." The low-pitched roof is probably its most attractive feature for that is the indication of modernity. The bungalow is replacing the Creole house, in town, city, and on all but the smaller farms. It is a moderate-size house and therefore not in competition with the shotgun house or camp. These latter houses serve the same function as in earliest days, and the shotgun is beginning to replace the small Creole house. The bungalow is certain

to be the typical dwelling of the area in the future, if nothing more "modern" is introduced.

In all respects, the bungalow of French Louisiana is like the Southern bungalow. The form is rectangular and the roof ridge runs from front to back. The plan is two rooms wide and two and a half or three rooms deep. The house may be completed in weatherboard or any of the modern kinds of siding materials. Bevel and drop siding are the most common and preferred kinds. Some shiplap is used, sometimes with imitation brick tarpaper or asbestos siding. If wood is used the house is painted. The bungalow is the only house among the common types which is generally painted.

The greatest variation of form is exercised on the façade. Many kinds of porches are used which considerably alter the appearance of the front (Pls. 86 through 89). The typical Southern bungalow has shed and gable porches, supported by square wood or half-brick and half-wood pillars. These either cover the full width of the house or only the door or doors. There are recessed half and full porches on the simpler houses. On the lower bayous, generally in the area of shotgun houses, the same kinds of porches are used for both types, bungalow and shotgun. In these places the external appearance of the two types is about the same, except for the width.

The bungalow often has two front doors, but this cannot be ascribed to a transposition of that trait from the Creole houses without exception. Outside of French Louisiana the bungalow often has two front doors, more so in the country than in the city. That trait is definitely connected with the house.



Near Acy



Shell Beach

Types of Regional Bungalows



Near Whitehall



Golden Meadow

Types of Regional Bungalows





Bayou Du Large



Bayou Du Large

Bayou Bungalows



Maurepas



Bayou Du Large

Bayou Bungalows

Certain evidence suggests that the bungalow in French Louisiana has a dual origin, or that there are two kinds of bungalows. In addition to the typical Southern bungalow, there is another which is smaller and has much simpler lines. Porches are like those of the shotgun house, and eaves are not wide. There is a regional and economic differentiation between these two types. Both are well represented in the towns and cities. The Southern bungalow is found in the areas of "middle class" residence. The other is economically marginal. In the country, the former is best represented in the areas of agriculture among the prosperous small farmers, the latter occurs in the trapper-fisher landscapes. This second type appears to be a regional development in part and so might be called the "bayou bungalow." On the lower bayous such a dwelling is sometimes called a "double house." In this connection the shotgun house is termed a "single house." It is not unusual for a bungalow to be made by adding a shotgun house to one that has already been in use. This suggests that the bayou bungalow might have had an independent origin, although the stimulus for the improvisation might have been the Southern bungalow.

In addition to the facts of distribution already related, there is an important connection between subregional economic prosperity and the numerical importance of the Southern bungalow. Because it is so popular it is usually built in preference to any other kind, if it can be afforded. The appearance of many bungalows is an indication of economic advance. Conversely, its absence may indicate economic stagnation. It is noticeably absent in the old plantation country along both sides of the Mississippi River. It is more common along

any highway, and is increasing in the heart of the sugar-cane country and on those bayous where the commercial fishing industry is centered.

A house of questionable affiliations might be termed the Creole bungalow (Pl. 44, Fig. d.). It has the general form of the bungalow, but the roof is hipped in front and back instead of ending in gables. Except for the orientation of the roof ridge, the general appearance of the house more closely resembles that of the Creole houses. There is always a gallery, recessed like that of a Creole house, which crosses the front of the house and sometimes extends all or part of the way down the side. A dormer window or two is characteristic. The room arrangement is very much like that of the larger Creole houses; usually there is a central hall. It is always a large house, well finished and painted.

This type of house is not at all common, but it occurs almost everywhere except in the trapper-fisher landscape, and it is somewhat more numerous in the towns than in the country. Plantation houses are sometimes of this type. It is definitely quite old. A few specific examples are thought to be near one hundred years of age. Some have detached kitchens. Age alone would preclude the possibility that this house is related to the modern Southern bungalow, at least in the region. Most facts suggest that it is an early introduction of some kind of Southern planter-class dwelling to which Creole details have been added.

#### The Southwestern Louisiana House

A small frame house which is important in Southwestern Louisiana has begun to invade the eastern French area. This house consists of two small rooms side by side; usually each has a door. There may be a

shed-roof appendage on the back, but never any more than that. There may be no porch or only a shed porch, which might cover only a door, or the entire front of the house. No other kinds of porches are used. The siding is either board and batten, imitation brick, or plain tarpaper. Roofs are of tin or tarpaper.

This house takes the place of the poorer shotgun and camp houses in Southwestern Louisiana where these two types are uncommon. The center of distribution is in western St. Landry Parish and adjacent parts of Lafayette and Acadia parishes. It is numerous along the Teche, from which it spreads northward through St. Landry Parish into Pointe Coupee and Avoyelles and southward into Iberville Parish. In the south it extends into Assumption and northern Terrebonne Parish. The spread to the south is less marked, for there it is in competition with either the shotgun or camp houses.

#### The Camp Boat

The camp boat is a unique dwelling of some importance in coastal eastern Louisiana. Many families of trappers and fishermen live permanently on these boats. The boats are never called "house boats." There are other kinds which do not belong in the folk category.<sup>62</sup> The folk dwelling is never called anything but "camp boat." They resemble the shanty boats which were once so numerous on the Mississippi and its large tributaries, and undoubtedly are derived from them. The manner of living for some camp-boat people is like that of the shanty-boat men.

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<sup>62</sup>Drilling companies use especially constructed floating barracks which are called "quarter boats."

The hull of the camp boat is flat-bottomed and squared fore and aft (Pl. 90). Both ends are beveled a small amount and the sides are slightly flaring. The house is just as wide as the hull upon which it is built. Few hulls are wide enough to accomodate a catwalk along the side. The house is one room wide and three rooms long; the width is about eight to ten feet, the length about thirty to thirty-five. The doors lead straight from front to back in the same fashion as a shotgun house, but they are often placed to one side rather than in the center. Some have a narrow hall on one side. The roof is generally hipped near the front and back and usually there is a small porch at each end. The camp boats are always painted and are roofed with tin or tarpaper.

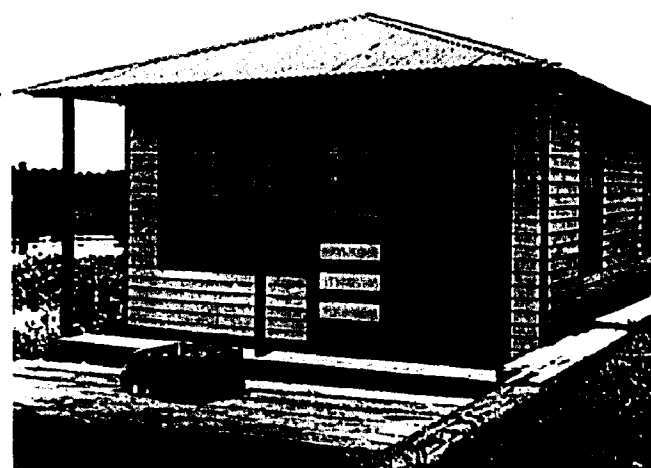
The camp boats are widely scattered throughout all the navigable waterways in the marsh. They generally occur singly, or in groups of two or three, around the lower ends of bayou settlements. There are a few large clusters around Morgan City. Re-entrants, called "pockets" or poches, are made in the bayou side or canal bank, in which the camp boats are moored. Canals and bayous are generally not wide enough to accomodate them and still admit traffic safely. The boats are moved only a few times a year at most, and usually return to the same place. The camp boats are not as numerous as they once were. They appear to be increasing only on the lower Atchafalaya. On most bayous some have been pulled up on the bank as stationary dwellings. The decline may be accounted for by the fact that it is now easier to get about the waterways in fast boats and there is no longer any need for the people to migrate to fishing or trapping areas.



Bayou Pointe au Chien



Bayou Gauche



Bayou Gauche

Camp Boats

## Chapter VI

### Outbuildings and Fences

In the beginning, the methods and materials of construction used for the accessory buildings were the same as those used for dwellings. Less care was taken in the construction and inferior materials were used. This same trait characterized the buildings of the present. Collombage construction was used for outbuildings after that method had been abandoned in favor of framing for the houses. Bark and palmetto were used for roofing materials when the houses of plantations and farms were being roofed with cypress shingles.<sup>1</sup> Half--timbering for farm and plantation outbuildings was abandoned much earlier than it was for dwellings because substantiality was a quality of less value in outbuildings. Judging from the present structures, and the materials used for the early ones, outbuildings must not have generally been put together with great care.

Although many outbuildings of the region today appear to be quite old, actually very few are older than forty years. There seem to be none joined by mortise and tenon. Examples of earlier buildings have all been destroyed, but some of the materials used recently, and methods used at present illustrate earlier stages.

All outbuildings, from the largest barn to the small tool shed, have the same basic form, which is that of the primitive buildings. They are rectangular, single rooms with a saddle roof. The entrance to any building is always in the gable end. The only changes are made

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<sup>1</sup>Cruzat, "Chaouachas Plantation," pp. 613-614.  
Prichard, "Inventory," pp. 986-987.

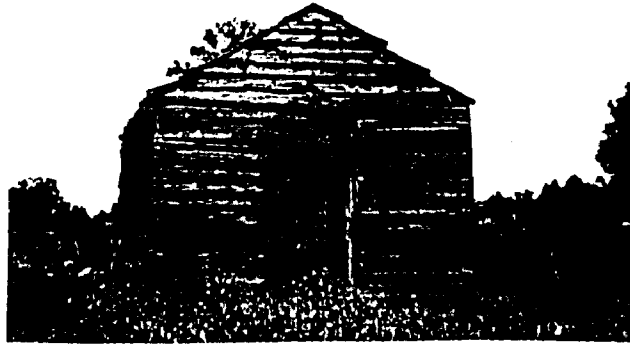


by attaching a shed-roof appendage to the sides or back. That is the standard method for enlarging any structure, and it is extensively used. The shed roof may be attached so that it joins with the roof of the main structure, usually with a lower pitch, or with the side of the building, from a few inches to several feet below the roof. Eaves on any outbuilding are rare features.

The materials of construction, if arranged in order of simplicity and what appears to be the evolutionary sequence, begin with riven boards about five feet in length and about six inches in width. No longer is the riving of boards practiced, but there are a number of barns and smaller outbuildings constructed wholly or in part of such boards. Except for tool sheds, these are always fixed to the frame in a vertical fashion. Average barns are made with two vertical rows on the sides; the gable ends have three rows of full length with some odd lengths to fill the apex. Other buildings of smaller size are made in the same fashion, but with only one row of full length for the sides and gable ends, with shorter pieces for the apex. The roofs of these buildings are made of the same riven boards or shingles.

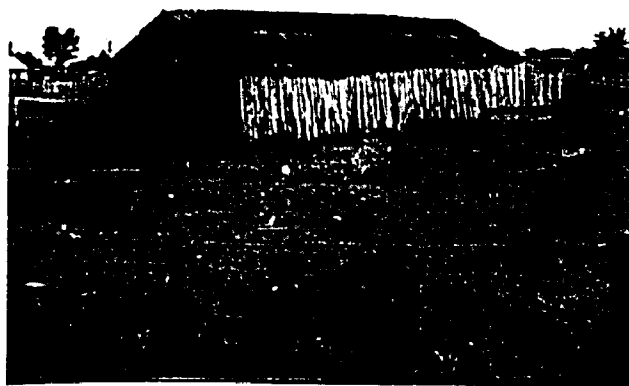
Clapboards are not used on outbuildings. Horizontal siding of ordinary planks is occasionally used. Vertical siding of ordinary planks is predominant. Occasionally batten is used. There are some buildings left with cypress shingle roofs, but the conversion to galvanized corrugated iron is almost complete. Outbuildings are never painted and they have the same gray, weathered appearance as the dwellings.

Barns. The principal outbuilding for the farm is the barn. Generally the size is less than that of the dwelling. A barn the size of a



Bayou L'Ourse

Fig. a. A Shed of Riven Boards



Near Wallace

Fig. b. A Barn of Riven Boards

four-room house is considered large. Buildings as small as 12' x 15' are used as barns and are called such. Anything between these limits is about average. The simplest type is the predominant saddle-roof barn (Pl. 92). Very large barns are partitioned lengthwise into two small side rooms and a large central room. A single shed may be attached to one side either with roofs joined or set lower against the wall. This may be done at the time of building, but most often it is the answer to a needed enlargement. Such a barn can be called a "single-shed barn." This technique is continued to produce a "double-shed barn" (Pl. 93) with a shed on both sides. A shed added to the back forms a "three-shed barn" (Pl. 94), which is not unusual.

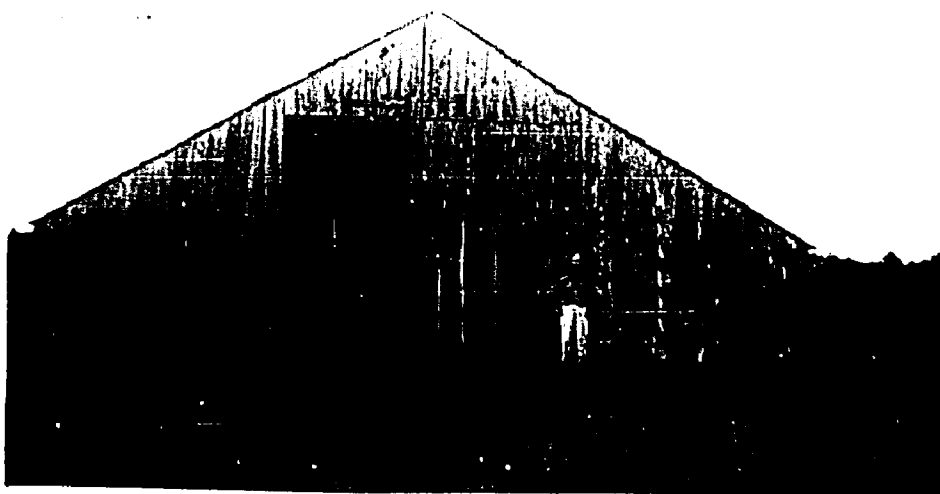
In general, the principal room of a barn is used for vehicles, carts, wagons, or tractors. In large barns there is always a loft. The sheds on the sides are used either as stalls or for tool storage. A shed on the back is usually divided into stalls.

Corn crib. The corn crib is a small structure, usually not more than six feet square with walls seldom more than six feet high. It never has a shed attachment. The building is always floored and elevated on piers. In earlier days the piers were of small logs and usually several feet high. The logs were peeled or barked as a protection against rats and raccoons. The cribs of recent times have shorter piers which are protected by nailing bands of tin around them.

Potato house. Potato houses are used today only on the largest farms. Potatoes, especially sweet potatoes, were a staple food several decades ago, and any moderate-sized farm had a house in which to store them. The houses were smaller than a corn crib, but of about the same form and construction. On small farms the attic of the dwelling was often used



Bayou Du Large

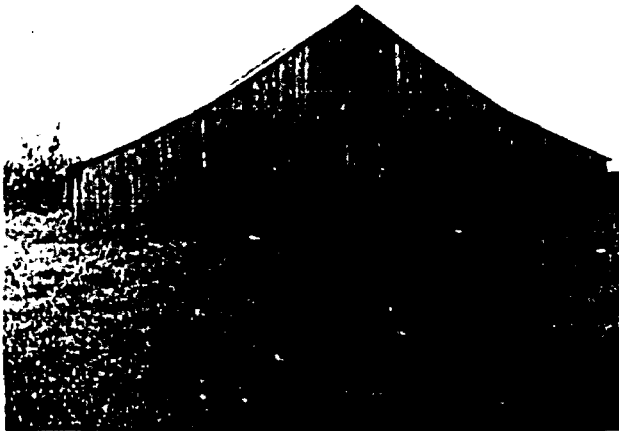


Bayou L'Ourse

Examples of Saddle-roof Barns



Bayou L'Ourse



Near Thibodaux



Bayou des Glaises

Examples of Double-shed Barns



Erwinville

A Three-shed Barn

for this purpose. A common practice was to pile the potatoes on some rise of ground, cover them with palmetto leaves, and pack dirt on top of the leaves. It is said that this protected the potatoes from rain and kept them from freezing.

Chicken houses and roosts. Small, saddle-roof, unfloored buildings are used for chicken houses (Pl. 95). Though now some are fitted for roosts, most are used only as laying houses. The traditional roost is still used because of the danger of predatory animals, especially the raccoon. It is raised on posts, at least four feet high, which are often sheathed with tin cans. The shelter itself has a shed or saddle roof and is floored. The chickens enter by climbing a ladder which is removed when they are secured for the night.

Cane mills and syrup houses. Only in a few exceptional cases is syrup made today on plantations or farms. All of the work is done by a few large mills to which the cane is hauled. In the early decades of the sugar industry almost every sugar cane plantation had its own mill. The Creole farmer could not produce his own sugar, but many had some kind of apparatus for making syrup. The simplest of these cane mills consisted of two concentric cylinders, at first of wood, later of metal. The inner cylinder was stationary and the outer was rotated around the inner by means of a long pole which was pulled by a draft animal. The animal would walk in a circle to turn the outer cylinder while cane was fed into slots in the cylinders and ground up. A kettle for cooking the juice was set up. The operations were conducted in the open or under an open shed.

A few farms had complete works which were housed in permanent structures though they were used only for a short season (Pl. 96).



Near St. Amant

Chicken House and Roost





Bayou L'Ourse



Bayou Du Large

Syrup Mills

Not many farmers could afford such expensive equipment and could not operate the mills exclusively for their own use. They would make syrup for farmers for some distance along the bayou. The work was usually done for a part of the product which was sold locally to those who did not or could not grow their own cane.

The syrup houses consisted of three rooms, each of which housed one of the main processes. In the first, the cane was ground by rollers powered by a small steam engine. The juice ran through a trough into the next room where there was a row of large iron kettles fixed in a brick platform, beneath which a fire was built. The juice was poured from one kettle to the next by means of large wooden buckets attached to the end of heavy poles. The poles rested on a large beam which ran from wall to wall in front of the kettles and which served as a fulcrum for operating the buckets. The cooking juice was thus transferred through a series of three or four kettles, then into a chute which ran into the third room. There it was conducted into shallow, portable troughs where it was allowed to cool.

There are a few of these small syrup houses left today, but only one is known to be operated regularly, that of Mr. Frederick on Bayou Du Large. A reminder of the old days is the iron syrup kettle, or as it is sometimes called, sugar kettle. These are scattered all over the area in which cane is grown. Most are used as water containers for livestock. Some are used as cisterns and pots for washing clothes.

Grist mills. Grist mills are nonexistent today. At one time they were fairly common. Small mills powered by draft animals produced most of the grits and corn meal used locally. They were managed in the same way as the syrup mills. The farmer possessing one would do the

work for the locality for a share. The only memento of these mills are the millstones, which are quite numerous. They are used as stepping stones in front of low houses and outbuildings and in walks.

Four de compagne. The "outdoor oven" or four de compagne was an essential unit of the farmstead in eastern French Louisiana, where wheat bread is traditionally preferred over corn bread. The use of this oven, and the oven itself, have almost disappeared; however, it is very well remembered. The oven (Pl. 97) is built on a platform about two feet high, about three to four feet wide and a foot greater in length. It is covered by a shed or saddle roof supported on corner posts five to six feet in height. The oven is made of mud tempered with moss; the same material with which the mud-walled houses were built. In building it the mud was shaped over half a barrel to a thickness of about three inches. The barrel was covered all around except for a small opening at the front and a small smoke hole of about two inches diameter in the back near the top. The floor of the platform was covered as well. When this had been done, the barrel was filled with wood and burned. All the wood burned, leaving the hard shell of mud as the oven.

The oven was used in this manner. A fire was built to heat the mud walls and floor, then the coals were raked out. The proper temperature was determined by placing some flour on a paddle and thrusting it into the oven for a few seconds; if it browned, the oven was ready for the bread dough. The dough, usually a circular loaf, was placed on a long-armed paddle and deposited on the oven floor. A board or wooden door covered with a wet cloth was placed against the opening and braced in place by a long pole which had one end against the door and the other in the ground. A wet-rag plug was kept in the smoke hole. It could be



Bayou Bonfuca



Bayou Lacombe

Outdoor Ovens

removed to regulate the temperature if necessary.

Italian immigrants made a similar oven which could be distinguished from the French oven only by its form. The Italian oven was circular in plan and the French was an elongated oval. The Italians carried their country oven wherever they went in French Louisiana. The chief place of entry was New Orleans. Most of these people tended to stay in the towns and cities, but some worked as field laborers, and often built their ovens in areas where outdoor ovens were not used. The principal area of the French oven is the south-southeastern part of the state; from Terrebonne Parish through Assumption, north Lafourche, and Ascension, and from there along the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Outside of this area the oven was as likely to be Italian as French, but within it the French oven predominated. From Bayou L'Ourse westward along the lower Teche, the outdoor oven was known only as the "Dago oven."

#### Fences

The frontier fence consisted of stakes in the ground. It served all purposes from enclosing gardens and fields to penning livestock. This fence was the answer to the problems of provisional construction under the meager circumstances of frontier conditions. The stake fence, which is to be distinguished from a picket fence, was actually a small palisade. Each stake was an independent member of the fence; there were no horizontal runners to connect the stakes and stabilize the fence. The stakes or pieux were riven from cypress logs. Any piece of riven wood is called a pieu. The only tools necessary for riving pieux were the froe or couteau pieu, maul, and axe.

Two kinds of pioneer fence were used: standing pieux and horizontal

pieux. Each had its own special uses. The fence of standing pickets or pieux debout was the direct descendant of the stake fence and progenitor of the modern picket fence. A stake fence, by the addition of a horizontal runner near the top, becomes a kind of picket fence. A second runner could be added near the bottom. The runners give the fence much greater stability. The final stage in the evolution of the picket fence was the addition of posts which supported the pickets and made it unnecessary to drive them into the ground. Early fences of standing pickets did not have posts. Such a fence was used from the beginning of the pioneer period until about 1920. They are quite numerous today, although they are no longer being constructed. The extant fences are not quite what the older fences were. It is traditional that the old fence of standing pieux was almost as tall as a man when first built. With age the parts of the pickets in the ground rot and the fence is repaired by driving the pickets farther into the ground. Old informants say that most people do not know that a picket fence should be high enough to prevent chickens from flying over.

Picket fences are still quite common. This is partially due to tradition, for often they are not functional. Whether functional or not, the location of fences of pieux debout with respect to the dwelling is about the same now as it was in the beginning of the pioneer period. They are characteristically used for yards around or near the house. The front yard is generally used for flower gardens and the back yard for fowls. The only other common uses for this fence are to enclose vegetable gardens and orchards which are always quite near the dwelling.

The old-style fence is being replaced by modern wire fences to some extent, and especially by modern picket fences. The modern picket fence



Bayou Du Large



Bayou L'Ourse

Fences of Vertical Pieux

is built of a framework of posts and horizontal runners to which the pickets are nailed. The pickets are never driven into the ground. This is quite different from the old principal, and is not a regional development. These fences are constructed of milled lumber, are seldom more than three feet high, and are generally painted. The tradition of the picket fence is quite strong. It is one of the few survivals of the pioneer period. At one time almost every house in the farm landscape had picket fences which were functional. Now there are long stretches in some bayou settlements where there are no fences of that kind, and if the modern picket fence is used, it is only ornamental. Wire fences have taken over functional uses.

The second kind of pioneer fence was the fence of pieux a travers, or fence of transverse pieux, sometimes called the "pieux fence." It consisted of posts in which there were holes, and rails which were inserted in the holes. In the eastern United States this kind of fence is known as a "post and rail" fence. The center of distribution is southern New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. It was not used in the deep South. There the pioneers established the rail (snake or worm) fence. The pieux fence of French Louisiana was in distinct contrast to the rail fences in the surrounding Anglo-American country. Therefore, the area of its former distribution is one of the best indicators of the limits of the French Louisiana landscape during the pioneer period. The descendants of the French in the Cane River country of Natchitoches Parish built such fences.

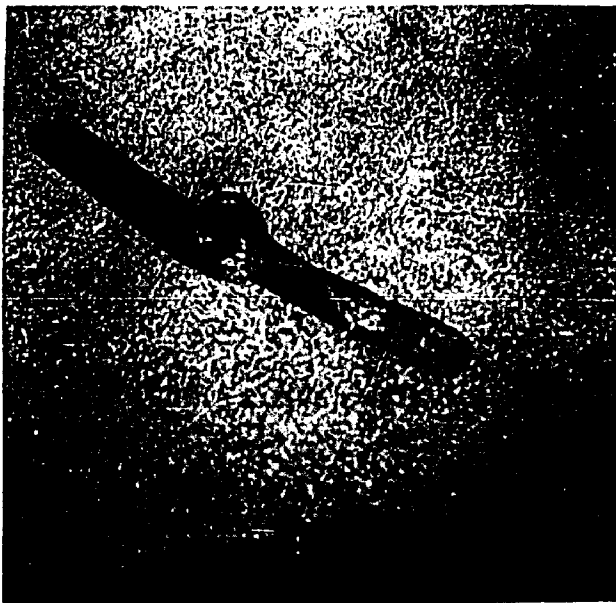
The pieux fence no longer exists. In a few places attempted reconstructions of the fence are used for ornamental purposes, and there are some fragmentary remains of old fences. The fence was used to



enclose cultivated fields and pastures; it was never used around the dwelling. The decline in its use began in the 1880's with the advent of barbed wire. Had the fence been used for any of the yards around the house, it might still be common. Barbed wire greatly simplified the problem of fencing fields and rapidly replaced the pieux fence.

The pieux fence was constructed entirely of cypress. Posts and rails were split from logs by means of a large couteau pieu. The posts were provided with a row of slots which held the tenons on the ends of the rails. The slots were cut in the posts by means of a tool called a piercer pieu, which is like an adze with a trough-shaped blade. In the Bayou L'Ourse area an alternate name for this tool is arminette a couteau. It was operated in the same manner as an adze or arminette, which must have required considerable skill. In setting up the fence the post was held at an angle, and the tenons of the rails were inserted while the post was pushed into an upright position. The work required a number of men. The usual height of the fence was about five to six feet, and the usual number of rails was five. That height was necessary for cattle pens and pastures. A three-rail fence was used to pen hogs. The fence was also called a "five-pieux fence" or a "five--rail fence." A less common name was barrier a piston.

In recent times all fields and pastures have been enclosed by wire fences. Two kinds of wire predominate, barbed and hog wire. These are used according to the protection desired. Barbed wire alone is used only to fence pastures and enclose fields against cattle. Where it is intended to protect a field from all kinds of livestock or to pen all kinds of livestock, the two kinds of wire are used together. The lower three feet of the fence is made of hog wire above which are strung two



Welsh

A Fence of Horizontal Pieux and a Piercer Pieu Blade

or three strands of barbed wire. This is by far the most common type of wire fence.

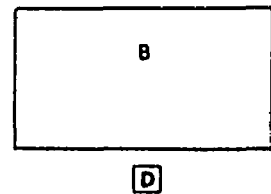
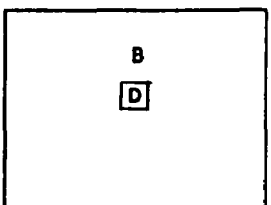
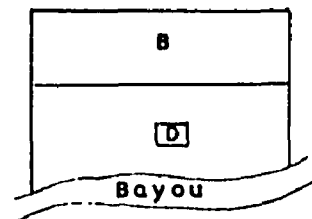
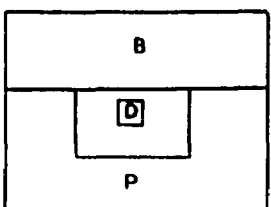
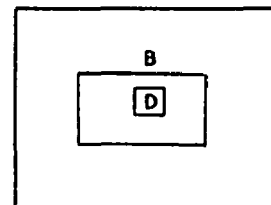
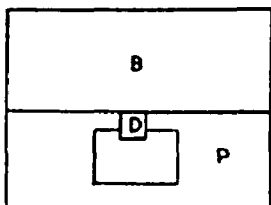
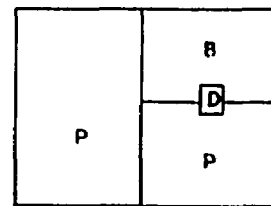
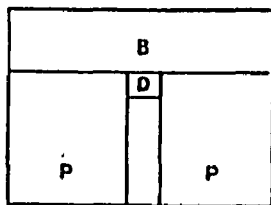
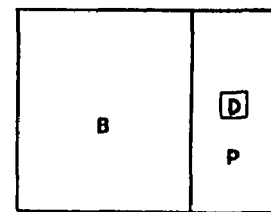
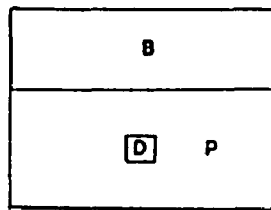
### Types of Enclosures and Assemblages

Conventionalized diagrams of the different types of enclosures are given in Plate 100. An outstanding characteristic is the location of a pasture at the front of the dwelling. Animal husbandry has always occupied a secondary role in Creole agriculture. A large pasture was never necessary. A pasture of such size as would accommodate a few draft animals and riding horses was all that was required. These were fenced in a small pasture in front of the house. Up until the present time beef cattle and milk cows were allowed to range. Range areas are limited along a bayou. The only areas were the bayou bank, the lands toward the backswamp which were too poor for cultivation, and the backswamp itself. As cultivated fields separated these two locations, it was necessary to leave a lane between cultivated fields leading from the backswamp to the bayou front. The fences enclosed the fields, the cattle were free to move from one location to the other. Every night the cattle came or were led to the bayou bank. Now that the pattern has been generally reversed, the cattle are penned, the fields are open, and the lanes have almost disappeared.

A salient feature of the Creole farm is the double front yard. This seems to have been carried from the earliest times to the present and may even extend back to Normandy.<sup>2</sup> In this arrangement the outermost

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<sup>2</sup>Demangeon, A., "L'Habitation Rurale en France, Essai des Classification des Principaux Types," Ann. de Geog., XX (1920), 352-357.



DIAGRAMS OF TYPES OF ENCLOSURES

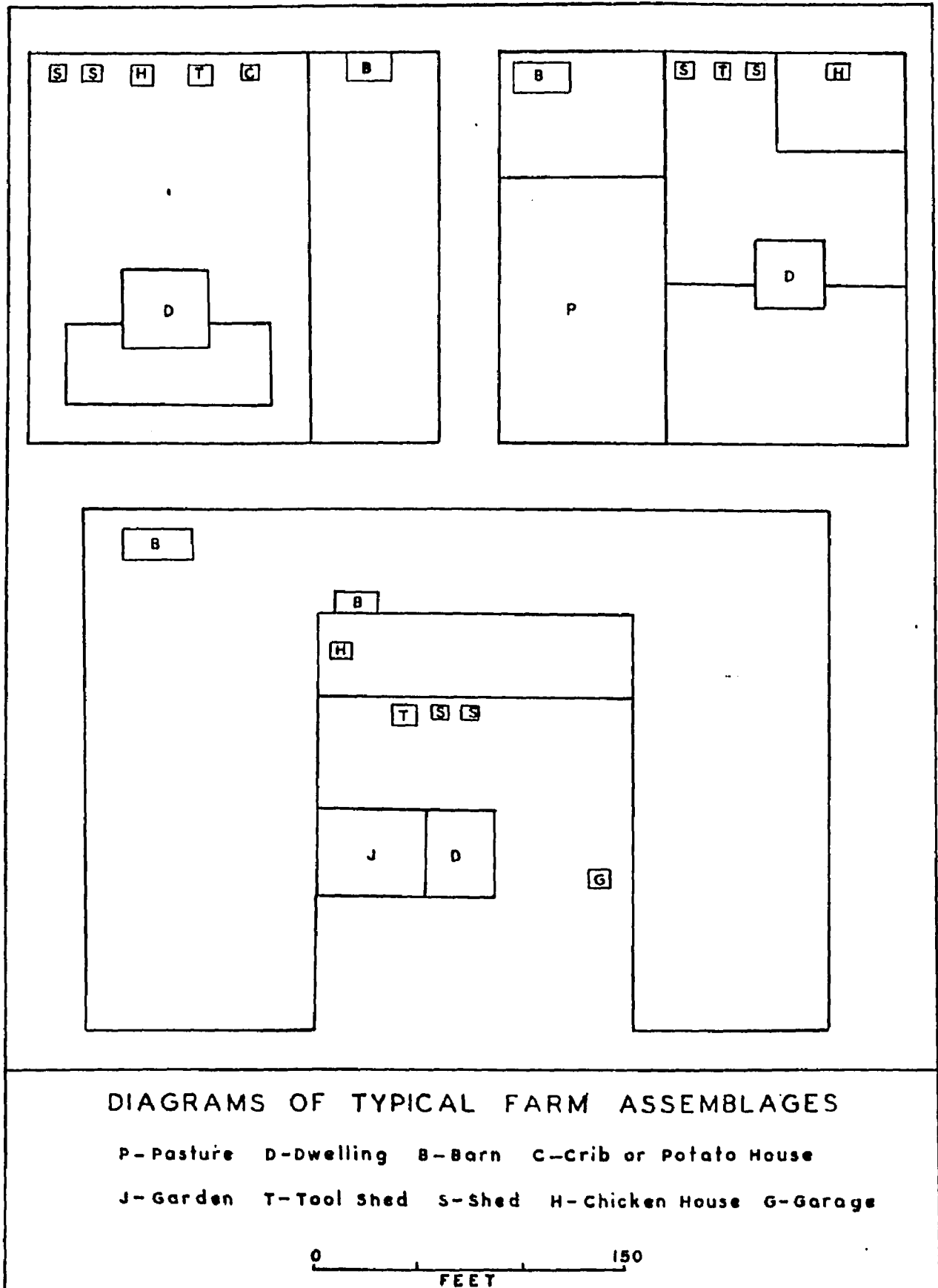
D Dwelling

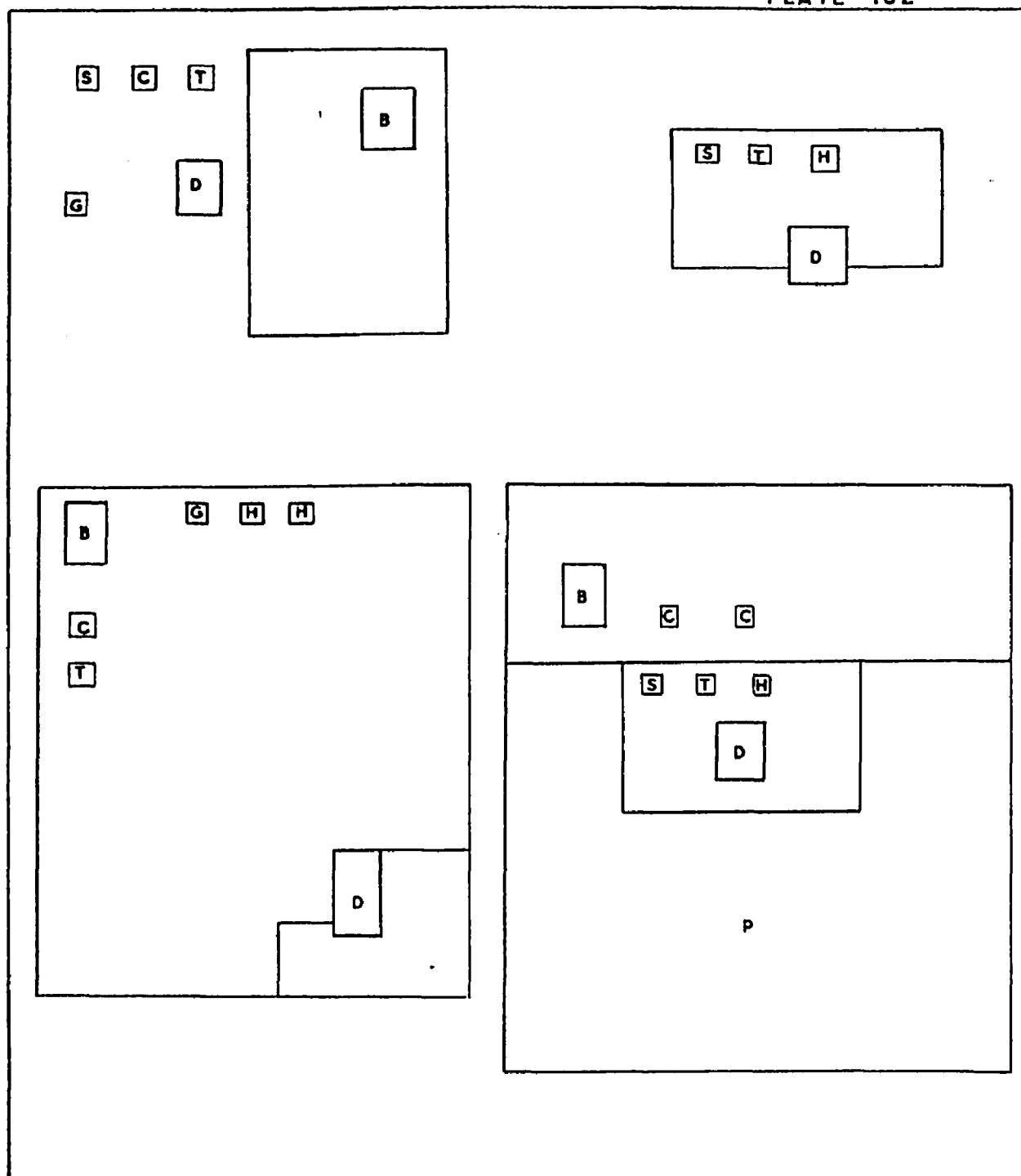
B Barnyard

P Pasture

yard is the pasture and the inner yard, which surrounds the front of the dwelling, may be a flower or vegetable garden, or it may have no special use. The back yard of the farm is often the barnyard and fowl yard combined.

The outbuildings of the typical farmstead are clustered closely around the back of the house. The house is always the dominant building, for seldom is the barn as large as the house. The number and kinds of outbuildings for the average farm vary according to the period to which the farm belongs. In general, the older places have more outbuildings, because the number of activities normal to a farm have decreased with time. Some specific examples of characteristic assemblages are given in Plates 101 through 106.



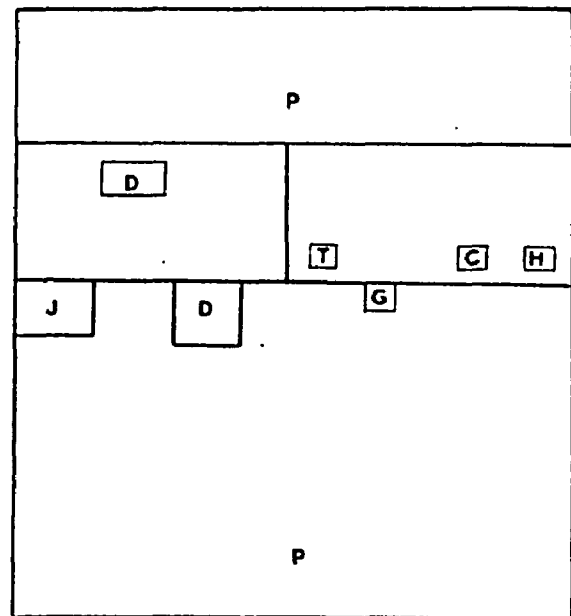
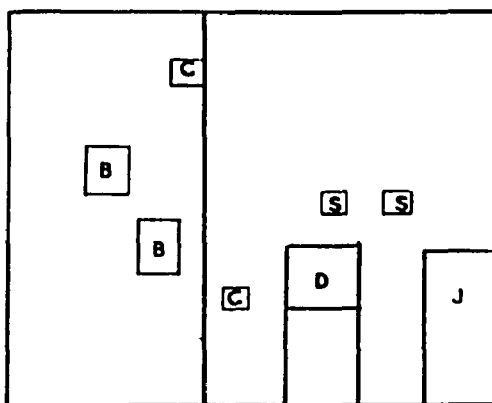
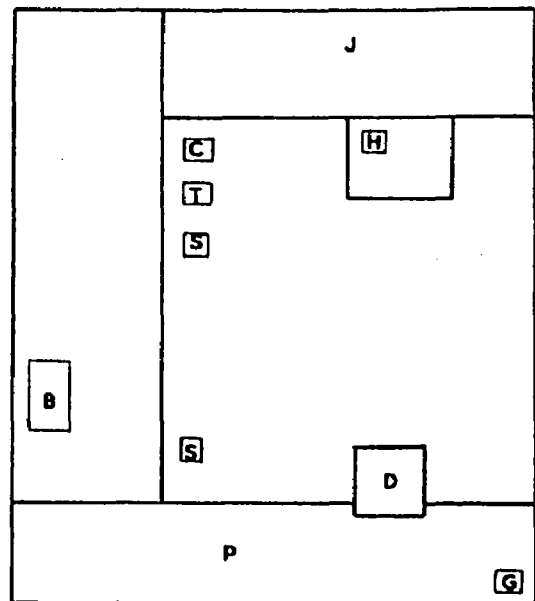
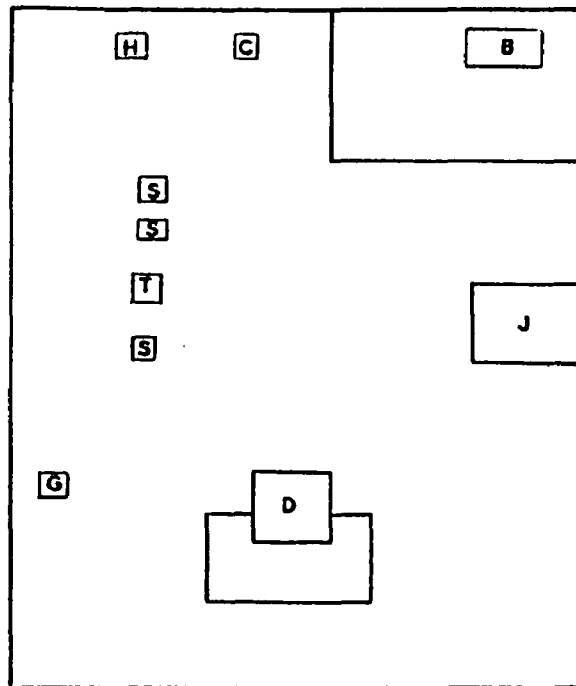


# DIAGRAMS OF TYPICAL FARM ASSEMBLAGES

P-Pasture D-Dwelling B-Barn C-Crib or Potato House

J-Garden T-Tool shed S-Shed H-Chicken House G-Garage

0 150  
FEET



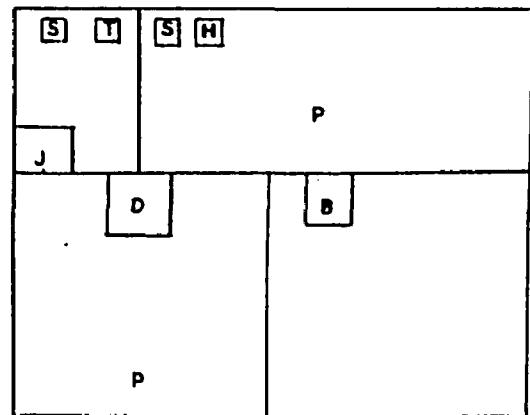
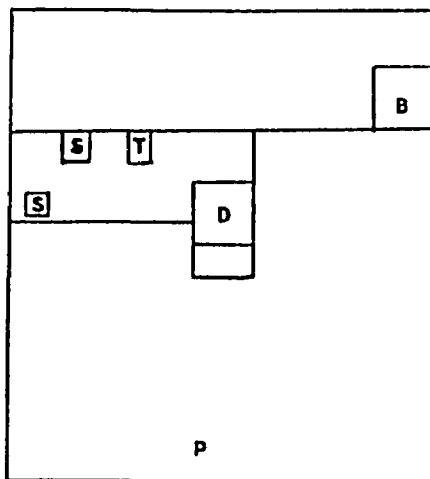
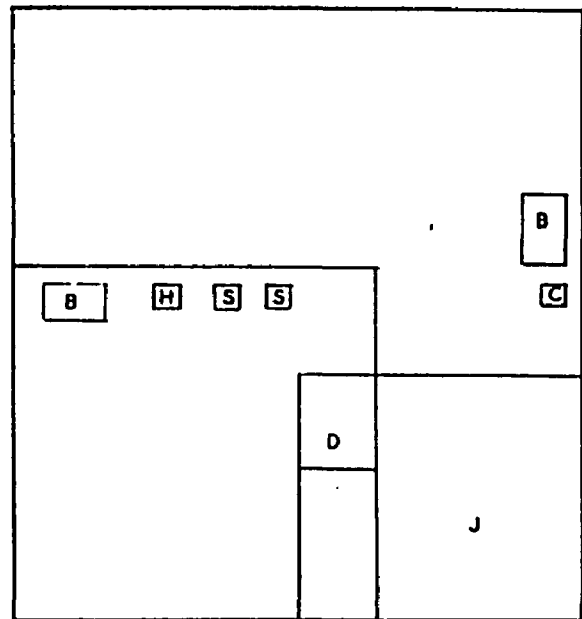
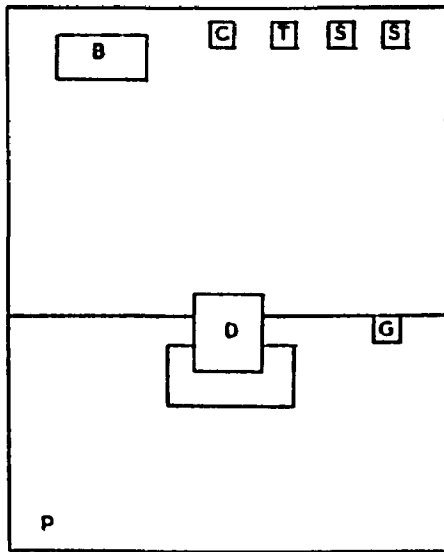
# DIAGRAMS OF TYPICAL FARM ASSEMBLAGES

P-Pasture D-Dwelling B-Barn C-Crib or Potato House

J-Garden T-Tool Shed S-Shed H-Chicken House G-Garage

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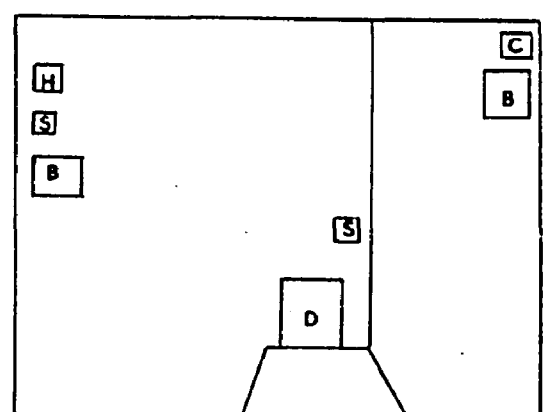
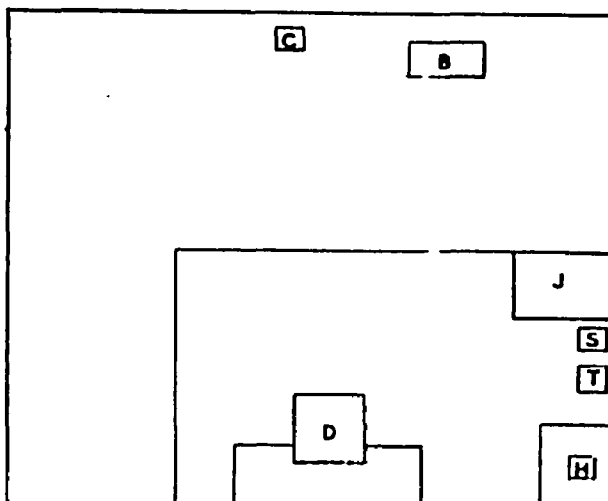
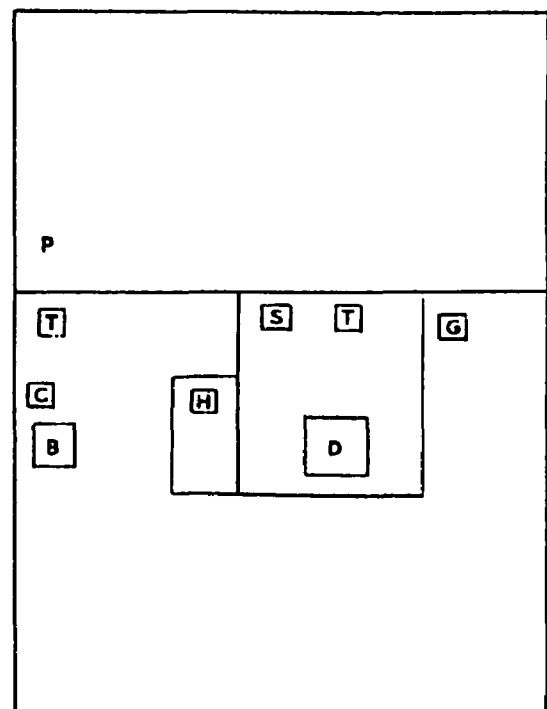
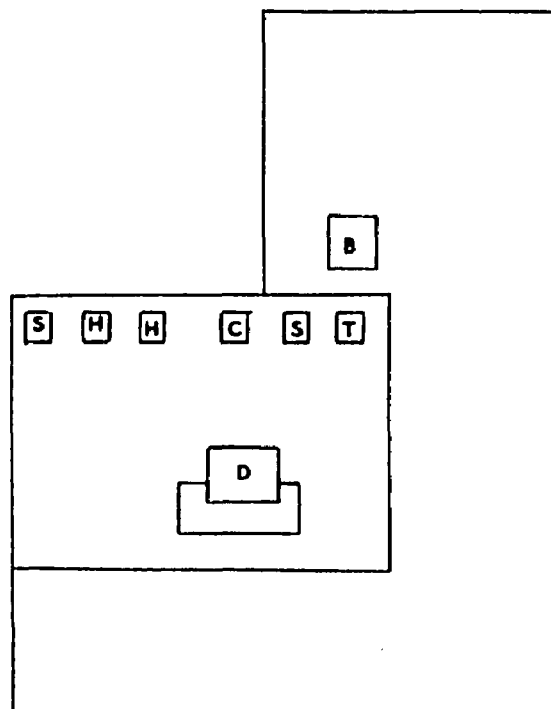




# DIAGRAMS OF TYPICAL FARM ASSEMBLAGES

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J-Garden T-Tool Shed H-Chicken House S-Shed G-Garage

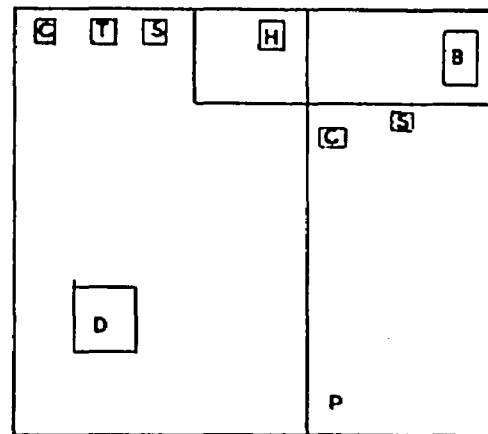
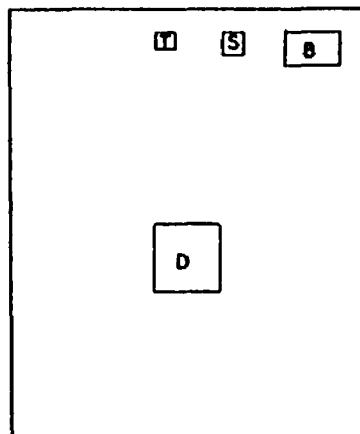
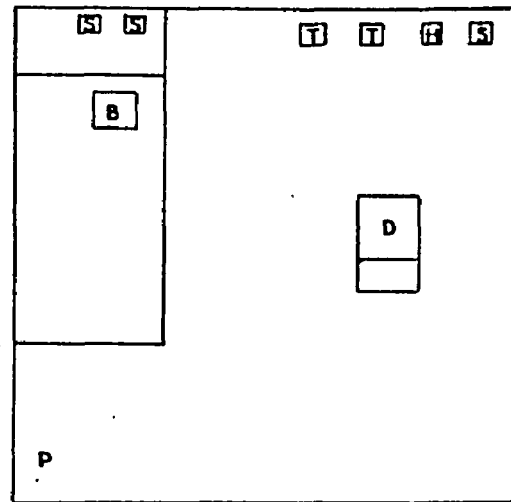
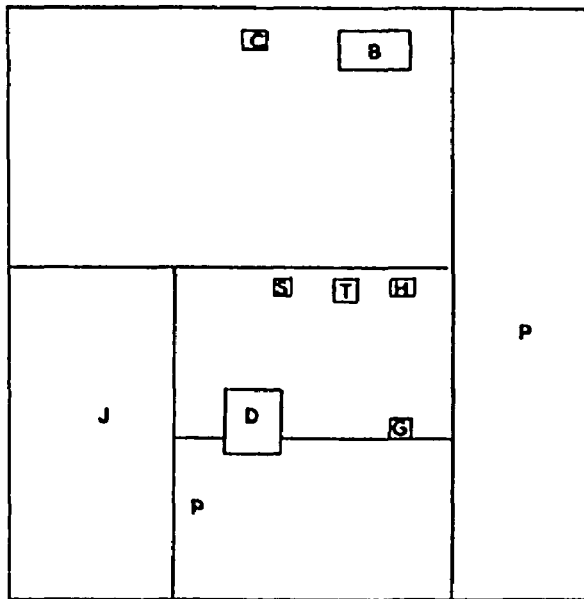
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# DIAGRAMS OF TYPICAL FARM ASSEMBLAGES

P-Pasture D-Dwelling B-Barn C-Crib or Potato House  
J-Garden T-Tool shed S-Shed H-Chicken House G-Garage

0 150  
FEET



# DIAGRAMS OF TYPICAL FARM ASSEMBLAGES

P-Pasture D-Dwelling B-Barn C-Crib or Potato House

J-Garden T-Tool shed S-shed H-Chicken House G-Garage

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FEET

## Chapter VII

### Folk Boats

One of the most outstanding characteristics of settlements in eastern French Louisiana is their location near some water body. Most settlements are on or near bayous, rivers, lakes, swamps, or marshes. Water bodies often are important in the daily living activities of the people for resources and communications, and without them many settlements would never have come into existence. Each kind has its own particular use and resources. Each is the center of different kinds of activity and creates different requirements of trafficability. The marsh is essential to the trapper who must use special boats and methods in his work. There are many settlements of people along the margins of the large swamps who make a part or all of their living from the swamp in diverse ways. These swampers spend much of their time on water and have developed several kinds of boats.

The bayou is important to all people generally as a means of local communication. This function has greatly decreased in importance since the advent of good roads. At the time of settlement and throughout the pioneer period, the bayou was vital to internal communications. Locally, all water had the same importance, whether it was the Mississippi or a small bayou. Only the scale of use was different; the Mississippi carried greater cargoes on larger boats than the bayous. Goods and people moved on water. As the quality of roads improved water traffic declined. Today many bayous are no longer important drainage features because the Mississippi floods are so well controlled. Where bayous have become relict there are few boats in evidence, but the boat tradition is strong, as is the memory of the time when boats were in use daily.

Bayous which are important for drainage and transportation are kept open by dredging. Under these conditions the use of boats is more extensive than the situation requires, i.e., boats survive where they can though their use may not be quite what it was originally. With the advent of the automobile the bayou became a disadvantage in one respect, now it had to be crossed. When people moved up and down the bayou by boat, it was easy to stop on one side as on the other. Before autos were common possessions, short trips or visits within walking distance along the bayou were often made in boats. A man could just as easily visit his neighbors on both sides of the bayou. In many places boats are retained for ferrying purposes; movement a short distance on one side of a bayou is accomplished by automobile. Few bayous have roads on both sides and those that do can be bridged only at certain critical points separated by a distance of miles. The use of boats has declined to the extent that some people in urbanized sections of a bayou settlement, in order to reach a point almost directly across the bayou, will travel miles by auto to a bridge and return on the opposite side.

The small boat is a typical feature of the cultural landscape of eastern French Louisiana. It is present in large numbers on all water bodies where there are settlements. The tradition is no longer what it used to be, but boats are still essential in the trapping, fishing, and swamp economies. On many bayous boats are in demand daily as a means of transportation. Even where there is no longer any real need for boats, they are still widely used.

The boat is as much a medium for cultural expression as is any other trait. Where the boat is important and the tradition is strong, there is developed a trait complex involving several kinds or types

of boats and a large number of related phenomena such as the devices and methods of propelling the boats and the many traits associated with their use. There is always a critical recognition of the different types of boats and their proper uses and a careful adherence to a precise terminology. Such is the case in the bayou settlements of French Louisiana. The boat tradition survives even beyond the bayous throughout French Louisiana.

In the northern part of the state there is a distinct absence of a boat tradition except in the Mississippi River flood plain region and on the larger streams where there are small numbers of commercial fishermen. In the hill areas of the north there is no such thing as a boat type; boats are constructed along individualistic lines and generally with a quality of workmanship not acceptable in the south. There is a relationship between the abundance of water bodies and a development of a boat tradition, but this does not have a direct bearing on the fundamental facts of type distribution and cultural associations.

There are two general characteristics of the small folk boats in Louisiana that are significant and should be considered when extra-regional comparisons are made. First, all boats are carvel-built, i.e., the planks of the hull are placed edge to edge so as to give the hull a smooth surface. This is also true for Mediterranean Europe. In contrast to this, the boats of northwestern Europe are generally clinker-built, i.e., the edge of one plank overlaps the edge of the next. Second, all Louisiana boats are flat-bottomed, a general characteristic of small boats on inland waters. If a keel is used on these boats, it is always external. It is generally true that all littoral water craft of Europe and America have internal or structural keels, and those of the inland waters are flat-bottomed.

The many boats of French Louisiana can be recognized as belonging to different categories or types for which there are, or were, special uses and names, and with which there is usually associated certain specific secondary traits. The boat complex readily distinguishes the cultural pattern of the bayou settlements and, in general, the French Louisiana pattern, from the surrounding Anglo-American pattern. The complex is intricate, and for some boat types it is possible to distinguish subregional associations based on minor differences in form or construction. The six major types are: (1) pirogue, (2) plank pirogue, (3) chaland, (4) esquif, (5) bateau, and (6) flatboat.

#### The Pirogues

The oldest type of small boat in French Louisiana is the dugout canoe or pirogue. The modern boat is the direct descendant of an aboriginal boat which was made by the Indians in approximately the area that is now the southeastern United States. It was the chief means of water transportation in that region. Bark canoes were used to the north, bull boats in the west, and dugouts on the west coast. The dugout canoe was the principal native boat of the West Indies. The French there and in Louisiana called these boats pirogues.<sup>1</sup>

DuPratz describes a raft of canes, termed a cajeu, which was used by the Indians of Louisiana.<sup>2</sup> However, the raft must have been of

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<sup>1</sup>The word pirogue is the standard French form of a word derived from the Spanish piragua which ultimately comes from a Carib Indian word for the dugout canoe. Reed, Louisiana French, p. 146, Jal, Glossaire Nautique, p. 1177. Many different spellings and pronunciations of this word were used by the English, such a pirog, perioque, perigua, pirogue, perroque, pirogua, and pettiauger. Baldwin, Keelboat Age, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>DuPratz, op. cit., pp. 123, 343.

greater importance on the upper Mississippi and Missouri than in the lower valley. In the area that is now Louisiana, the dugout canoe was by far the most important boat. Swanton mentions canoes of elm bark for the Chitimacha,<sup>3</sup> but most all early narratives mention only dugouts. These boats were fashioned from the trunks of large trees, usually cypress, sometimes poplar, and rarely other species. The tree had to be felled by burning, and the excavation of the canoe had to be done with fire before the Indians acquired steel axes. The best description of their manufacture is given by DuPratz:

"For this reason they always cut a tree close to the ground so that the fire they build at the foot of the tree would more easily consume the filaments and fibers of the wood which the axe had mashed. Finally, with much trouble and patience, they managed to bring the tree down. This was a long piece of work, so that in those times they were much busier than at present, when they have the axes we sell them. From this it happens that they no longer cut a tree down at the base, but at the height which is most convenient."

"This occasions them an infinite amount of labor, since they have no other utensils in this work than wood for making fire and wood for scraping, and only small wood is required to burn. In order to set fire to this tree destined for making a pirogue, a pad of clay, which is found everywhere, has to be made for the two sides and each end. These pads prevent the fire from passing beyond and burning the sides of the boat. A great fire is made above, and when the wood is consumed it is scraped so that the insides may catch fire better and may be hollowed out more easily, and they continue thus until the fire has consumed all the wood in the inside of the tree. And, if the fire burns into the sides they put mud there which prevents it from working farther than is demanded. This precaution is taken until the pirogue is deep enough. The outside is made in the same manner and with the same attention.

"The bow of this pirogue is made sloping, like those of the boats which one sees on the French rivers. This bow is as broad as the body of the pirogue. I have seen some 40 feet long by 3 feet broad. They are about 3 inches thick which

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<sup>3</sup>Swanton, "Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley," p. 347.



makes them very heavy. These pirogues can carry 12 persons and are all of buoyant wood."<sup>4</sup>

The Indians used only paddles, which were "about six feet long, with broad points, which are not fastened to the vessel, but managed by the rowers like shovels."<sup>5</sup> The pole must have been unknown to the Indians, for it is never mentioned. DuPratz observed that with a difficult job of navigation on the Red River, "if the waterman's pole was used, as on the Loire and other rivers of France, this obstacle would be easily surmounted."<sup>6</sup>

When the French entered the region they adopted the Indian dugout, which proved to be well suited to frontier conditions. There was little choice, for tools and materials were scarce and boats of European manufacture were not available. In 1700, at Biloxi, the need of boats and the lack of materials caused the governor of the colony to have "12 pirogues 30 by 35 feet long" constructed.<sup>7</sup> The frontiersman, with the exception of a few tools of European manufacture, was largely self-sufficient, and the dugout was ideally suited to his case. If the boat could not be obtained from the Indians, he could make his own. The material was found in any backswamp; for tools he needed only an axe and adze. The Indian provided the idea; the methods were changed to suit the new tools. The time-consuming and less-accurate method of burning was superseded by the chopping method.

The pirogue must have had some advantages over the boats the French

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<sup>4</sup>DuPratz, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>7</sup>Roland, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 11.

had, though that would be difficult to determine. DuPratz learned that he could make better speed in the pirogues than in the boats he had with him.<sup>8</sup> The dugout was very durable. There was little damage that it could suffer, and if cared for, it would last a lifetime. The weight must have reduced maneuverability and certainly made portages difficult. The early pirogues were large and weighed several thousand pounds when empty. They were dragged across portages. This was an unimportant matter where regular traffic was concerned, for the river routes were not interrupted. Within the region, most all settlements could be reached on water by some route, however circuitous.

Bark canoes were introduced into Louisiana by the Canadians. They were used by the French before there was any settlement, and a voyageur coming from Canada would have had a bark canoe. The canoes used by the explorers were often bark canoes. They were used at times by Tonti, Iberville, and Bienville.<sup>9</sup> The Mobile River was explored in 1701 by Sauvolle and four Canadians in a birch-bark canoe.<sup>10</sup> The early narratives often refer simply to canoes, which could have been either the dugout or birch bark.<sup>11</sup> Although the word "pirogue" was used for

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<sup>8</sup>DuPratz, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>9</sup>La Harpe, Bernard, Journal Historique de L'Etablissement des Francais a la Louisiane (New Orleans: A.L. Boimare, 1831), pp. 17-19.  
Margry, Pierre, Memoires et Documents pour Servir a L'Histoire des Origines Francaises des Pays d'Outre-mer (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie., 1879-1888), Vol. 4, pp. 412-417.

<sup>10</sup>de Villers, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>11</sup>Tonti in Margry, Memoires, Vol. 1, pp. 600-602, 566-568.  
Penicaut in Margry, Memoires, Vol. 5, pp. 457, 512, 554-557.  
Gravier in Shea, J.D., Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi (Albany: J. Munsell, 1861), pp. 132-136.

the dugout canoe from the very first, it was not used to the exclusion of the term "canoe." This makes it somewhat questionable as to when the use of the bark canoe was discontinued, but it could not have been long after the period of exploration. They were quite foreign to Indians and to all but Canadian French. Nothing was known of their construction and there was no suitable bark in the region from which to build them.

The form of the native dugout was changed in the hands of the French. They built them on less angular lines with pointed bow and stern. The shallow ends were made more hollow. The thickness of the shell was reduced. This was controlled by putting auger holes in it at certain places where the carpenter needed to see how thin he was cutting. These holes were usually placed at the curvature between the bottom and sides, and spaced about two feet apart. Thus, there were two parallel rows of holes which ran from bow to stern. When the boat was finished, the holes were plugged and sometimes caulked with pitch. The bottom of the dugout was not left entirely in the round, but slightly flattened near the widest part in the center. The bottom ran to a slight ridge at both ends. The sides were curved and very slightly flaring. Pirogues built by either Indians or French were without sheer, i.e., the gunwales were horizontal from bow to stern. These general features marked pirogue construction from frontier times to the present.

Within these limitations of form there was plenty of room for individualistic variations. The proportional difference between beam and length created the greatest differences. This was governed by the size of tree from which the pirogues were made. Individual boats may have had narrow beams and relatively great length with a linear appearance;

others might have had the bulging appearance created by a wide beam. The ordinary pirogues of the region, up to modern times, were generally over fifteen feet in length, but seldom more than thirty.<sup>12</sup>

During the frontier period, pirogues were the only cargo carriers in the Mississippi Valley, and special long-distance cargo pirogues were improvised for this need.<sup>13</sup> These were used in Louisiana on the Mississippi and important bayous, but they were not the commonplace boats of the Creoles. The period of the great cargo pirogues ended about 1775, though in Louisiana some cargo was still being carried to New Orleans in 1830, which was during the steamboat era.<sup>14</sup>

The decline of the pirogue on the Mississippi preceded that event on the smaller streams in more remote areas throughout the southeastern United States. In 1900, the dugout was still being used for ferrying and fishing purposes on most all of the large streams in Louisiana. After that time the decline in their use was rapid everywhere, except in the bayou country. Within two decades the distribution diminished to about the present limits. Southwestern Louisiana retained the pirogue a few years longer than did the northern part of the state. Pirogues predating the decline are easily distinguished from the modern boat. They are larger and more varied in form. Many of these boats are still

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<sup>12</sup>For a few descriptions of pirogues at different times see: Price, Inventory, p. 448; Chambers, New Orleans, p. 451; Pfaff, Shreve, p. 235; Prichard, Cathcart, p. 804; Fortier, Louisiana, p. 343. The Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans has a number of dugouts. Two are dated about 1840, and one is believed to date about 1750. The Anthropology Museum of La. State Univ. has one which dates about 1870.

<sup>13</sup>Baldwin, op. cit., p. 41, describes the great cargo pirogues.

<sup>14</sup>Fortier, Louisiana, p. 343.

to be found throughout French Louisiana and the Mississippi and Red River valleys. Most are between fifty and a hundred years old. A few are in good condition, having been stored in basements or barns or under houses. These are not used today. Some were put into service during the 1927 flood, never to be used again. Many more have been used for feed troughs, or have just been left rotting in ponds and sloughs.<sup>15</sup>

Following the disappearance of the pirogue in the rest of the state, the pirogue of the bayou country attained its modern form. The modern pirogues are remarkable for their similarity (Pl. 107 and 108). All are almost identical with a nodal type, as if they were cut from the same pattern, and differ only slightly in size. They are made to be used by only one person, though they might hold more. None is over fourteen feet in length; twelve feet is about average; and some are as small as ten feet. A fourteen-foot boat might be considered two place, though it would not be normally used for two riders.

The beam measurement for the typical pirogue is between twenty and twenty-four inches, or just about wide enough for a person to sit. The depth is about ten to twelve inches. The run to the stern is a little longer than that to the bow, so that the boat is slightly wider toward the bow. Both bow and stern taper rather sharply to a point. The bow is more deeply hollowed than the stern. The sides are straight above the waterline and curved below. The bottom is flat for the widest part

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<sup>15</sup>An example of the pre-modern pirogue is in the National Museum. Its dimensions are: length, 17 feet 8 inches; beam, 30 inches; depth, 11½ inches. "An open, flat-bottomed, keel-less, dugout canoe; with round and flaring sides; sharp hollow bow, straight and nearly vertical above the waterline, curved below; long easy run; V-shaped non-overhanging stern; two wooden rowlocks on each side with two thole pins in each; a seat at each end; battens for thwarts along the sides." Mitman, Catalogue, p. 205.



Kraemer



Bayou Du Large

Modern Dugout Pirogues



Barataria



Bayou Du Large

Modern Dugout Pirogues

and abruptly runs to a ridge at the bow and stern, which become almost vertical above the waterline. The sides curve up slightly toward bow and stern. The bottom is about one inch thick and the sides a little less. Usually there are two thwarts, each about a third of the boat length from the end. The front thwart may be a little higher than the one in the stern, which often serves as a seat. These may be wedged in, or nailed, or held by wooden stops. The bow and stern are reinforced with fillets of three or four inches length, level with, or below, the gunwales. A small strip of molding, about one inch wide and a half inch thick, is added all around the outside about one inch below the gunwales to protect them against any damage which might be caused by the boat striking anything.

This boat is regularly called a pirogue (pronounced "pēro"), and sometimes "dougout." It is never called a "canoe" in the area where it occurs.<sup>16</sup> The modern pirogue has been built since about 1910, which was just after the time that the distribution of pirogues was rather sharply reduced to about the present limits. The explanation for this cannot be found in a single factor. The usual explanation is that from that time there were no large cypress trees left. Although that is partially true, the cypress lumbering period was then not yet ended and undoubtedly some of the big trees were left. The cost of a prime log might have been a different matter. At that time roads were being improved and automobiles were coming into use. That would have reduced the necessity for the large freight pirogues, and at the same time would

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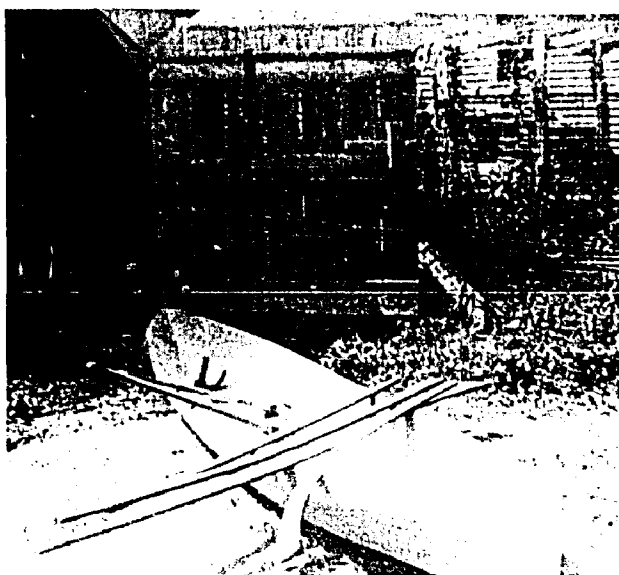
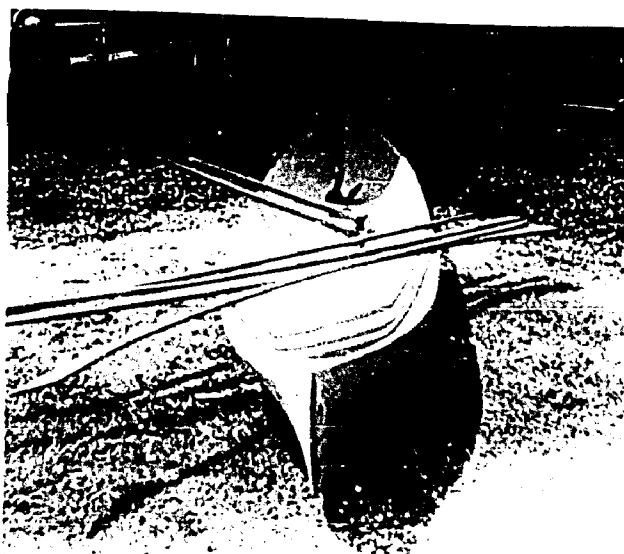
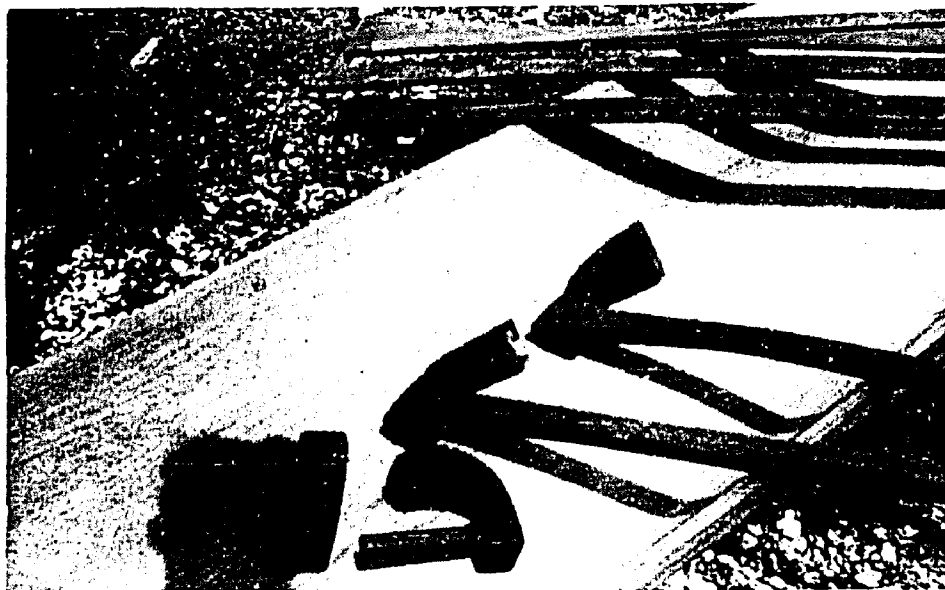
<sup>16</sup>The word canotte is used for a flat-bottomed cabin boat with an inboard engine in Terrebonne and parts of adjacent parishes.



not have affected the importance of the work pirogue. That time marked the beginning or advance of a number of economic activities which enhanced the value of the small pirogue. In the earliest days of cypress lumbering trees were often felled from small pirogues. Probably the trappers were the first to use smaller boats.

The modern pirogue is constructed from half a cypress log sawed lengthwise. The traditional tools are a hatchet, arminette (foot adze), "tisch" or "tee" (hand adze), drawknife, plane, and couteau de manche (templates), (Pls. 109 through 111). These are the only tools, and the drawknife and plane are not absolutely necessary. The arminette is the regular long-handled adze with a straight blade. The hand adze has a deeply curved blade and is used for more careful work on interior curves. The templates are flat strips of wood curved to mark the form of the pirogue.

The bark is removed from the log as the first step and a center line is marked off on the flat side which is to be the top of the dugout. A template is placed so that the ends of the curve are against the center line, and a line is drawn on the top of the log to outline one side of the bow. Then the template is turned over and the other side of the bow is marked out. Another template is used in the same way to outline the shape of the stern. Two more templates are used to mark the sheer or downward curvature from bow and stern toward the middle. This is very slight, seldom more than two or three inches. A series of transverse notches, as deep as the sheer line, are chopped into the log. Then the wood between the notches is split off. The inside is hewn out with a hatchet or arminette about two inches inside the lines which mark the outline of the dugout. When the inside has been roughed out, the log is



Kraemer

Pirogue-making Tools



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Pirogue Construction



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Pirogue Construction

turned over and the outside is shaped with the same tools. A smooth finish is made on the inside by means of the hand adze. This tool is used like a plane or scraper rather than as a chopping tool. Small pieces are shaved off until the inside has the proper curvature. The drawknife and plane are used to smooth the outside. The entire process takes only a few days for a good pirogue maker. The dugout is then fitted with battens and fillets. It must be allowed to dry for several months before being painted. The color is always green.

The pirogue is a very versatile boat and is suited to many conditions. It is used almost exclusively by men, and especially for work in marsh and swamp. Other boats have taken its place for ferrying and travel in most cases. It is essentially a single-place craft, and there is room in the bow for a small cargo. In the marsh, the pirogue has an advantage in its single-piece construction with rounded or smoothly curved lines. There are no sharp angles to offer resistance to the marsh grasses or mud, through which it must be frequently dragged. Travel in the marsh for a trapper typically requires movement from one "pond" or "lagoon" to the next over various kinds of marsh surfaces. The one disadvantage is the weight. In the swamp, the durable construction of the pirogue is its most valuable asset. There the chance is great that a boat will collide with a tree or run upon a cypress knee. The dugout is immune to knocks which soon ruin a boat of planks. Running upon a cypress knee is especially destructive to other boats. A dugout will slide or glance off, or overturn, and a swamper would much rather suffer an overturn than the loss of his boat.

A pirogue will last almost indefinitely if cared for properly. The most important thing is not to allow it to dry out. If not kept

moist, the wood splits and cracks. Many owners who do not intend to use their boats any more store them beneath their houses. They could be better preserved, but generally the underside of the house is damp and cooler than any other place and always out of the direct sunlight. Some men now use their pirogues only during the trapping season and store them the same way but fill the inside with moss or palmetto leaves. Just before it is used, the boat is submerged in the bayou and soaked for a few days. Boats that are used more frequently are allowed to stand half submerged in the bayou. Some pull them up on the bank in the shade of shrubbery and fill them with wet moss and cover them with palmetto leaves. Cypress wood does not rot easily when water-soaked.

Paddles and poles are used to drive the dugout under different conditions. Normally paddles are used. Paddles for all boats are hand-made and the best ones are those made for pirogues. A cypress picket from a fence is the most desirable wood for making a paddle. It has been well seasoned, is light and easy to carve, and will last long. The average length for a paddle is five feet, but the exact length depends upon the reach of the individual when the paddle is held in position. The proportional length of shaft and blade is about three to two. Handles are usually T-shaped and blades have blunt or slightly rounded ends.

The paddler sits on the stern thwart which is about two feet from the middle of the boat. The usual posture has one leg folded in front or under the seat and the other extended and braced on the bottom of the boat. A double kneeling position in which the paddler sits upon his heels is sometimes used without a seat. The standard position might be used with the paddler sitting on his folded leg. The boat is always



Bayou St. Jean Charles



Bayou Du Large



Bayou Boeuf Near Kraemer

Methods of Paddling a Pirogue

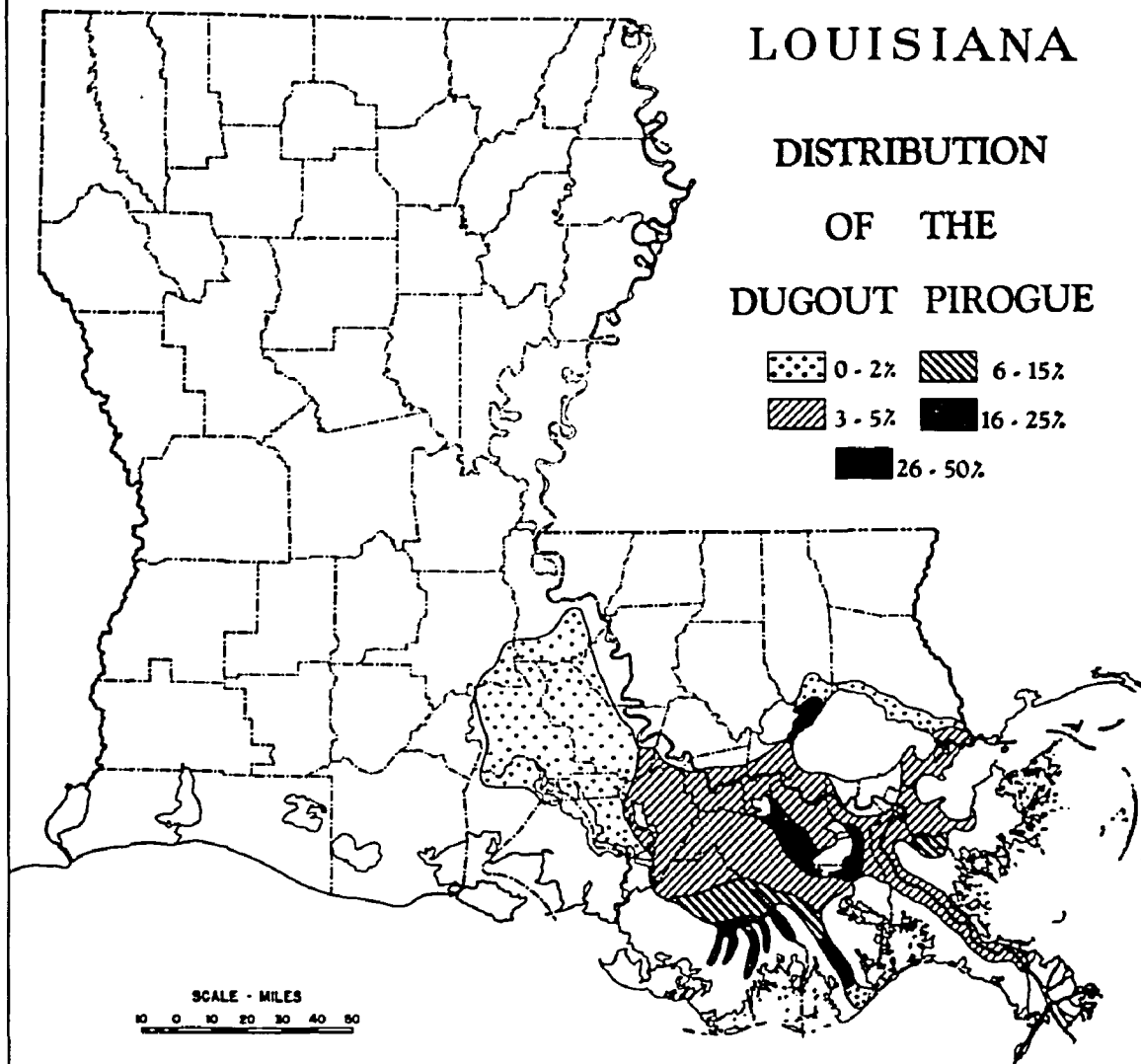
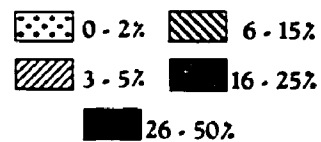
paddled on one side, usually the right. The handle of the paddle is held in the left hand and the right hand holds the shaft about four inches above the blade. In a full stroke the hand almost touches the water. All maneuvers are made from one position; sides are seldom changed. For straight distances a modified J-stroke is used. It does happen that a person may stand to paddle, but no paddles are made for this purpose. No considerable distances could be covered in this fashion and speed is impossible. It is done mostly by women to cross a bayou, who either cannot fit in the pirogue or who do not want to get their dresses wet.

Push poles or fourches are used mainly in the marsh and are especially designed for very shallow water. They vary in length from six to twelve feet, but most are between eight and ten feet. A small tree limb with a natural fork at one end may be used, with or without the bark being removed, but generally they are made with greater care. Bamboo poles are considered good by some because of their light weight, but they do not last long. Most good push poles are made of a heavy wood about two inches in diameter. Forks are added to one end by nailing two small pieces of wood, about one inch round or square and less than one foot long, opposite each other, or by inserting a forked piece of wood in a slot in the end of the pole. The purpose of the fork is to prevent the pole from sinking too deeply in the soft muck at the bottom of ponds and ditches when it is being used to propel. If it were not for the fork, all energy would be exerted in sinking the pole and no thrust would be imparted to the boat. A push pole is used while the boatman stands in the stern.



# LOUISIANA

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE DUGOUT PIROGUE



SCALE - MILES  
10 0 10 20 30 40 50

Sometimes the ends of the push poles opposite the forks are used for special purposes. An old method of crab fishing has small circular nets suspended on several feet of cord from cork or wooden floats. These are picked up by hooks on the end of a push pole which are made by binding two pieces of wire opposite each other. The wires extend about eight to ten inches beyond the end of the pole and are bent in a curve. This is hooked around the cord beneath the float and the crab net is removed from the water. Bamboo poles for this purpose alone are also made. A push pole may be made into a moss-picking pole by adding a hook of wire about one foot long to the end opposite the fork.

The pirogue is common only on the lower bayous in the southeastern part of the state or, roughly, the Mississippi delta. Plate 113 illustrates the distribution. The proportional representation of the pirogue is given in percentage figures which are not a measure of the importance of the boat, nor an indication of the actual number. It is very important in the marsh east of the Atchafalaya River, but is not mapped there because of the peculiar circumstances under which it occurs. It is significant in the areas where it attains six per cent and above.

The decline of the pirogue is imminent; rarely is one built today. There are a number of expert pirogue makers living, but adequate logs are lacking. If ever a suitable log is found, it is generally saved for a pirogue. They are still to be had, but are obtained at a great cost. The last stronghold of the pirogue is among the trappers. Some think that there are many advantages to the plank boat, which is taking the place of the dugout, but many still prefer the dugout. The matter of preference is undoubtedly in the realm of individual choice. It cannot be said whether this is due to the actual superiority of the

dugout, or whether the trappers are just reluctant to abandon a tradition.

The boat which is replacing the dugout pirogue is almost identical with it in form but is made of planks and does not have the smooth lines of the dugout (Pl. 114). It is known by several names. Within the area of the dugout it is often called a pirogue, especially by the younger generation. When it is necessary to distinguish it from the dugout, it is called "plank pirogue" or pirogue en planche. Most older people call it a "plank boat" or sometimes peniche. Outside the area of dugouts it is rarely called a pirogue, for that word means dugout. In southwestern Louisiana the plank pirogue is called either "skiff" or "canoe." On the lower Bayou Teche and toward Terrebonne Parish "Cajun skiff" is sometimes used. Where fishermen and sportsmen have recently introduced the boat in northern Louisiana it is generally called pirogue. Such introductions do not always preserve their identity, and names like "gar" and "sharp-shooter" are improvised.

Most informants remember the plank pirogue as becoming important about 1910. It is not certain whether it was created about that time, or whether it was in existence but not yet able to compete with the dugout for preference. The remarkable similarity between the dugout and the plank pirogues in form, size, use, and associated equipment make it clear that the former was the inspiration for the latter. The time of its arrival coincides with the expansion of cypress lumbering activities which created new uses and a greater need for pirogues. It seems certain that these new interests did not invent the plank boat, but they were undoubtedly responsible for making it more popular and spreading its use.



Barataria



Near Bayou Bonfuca

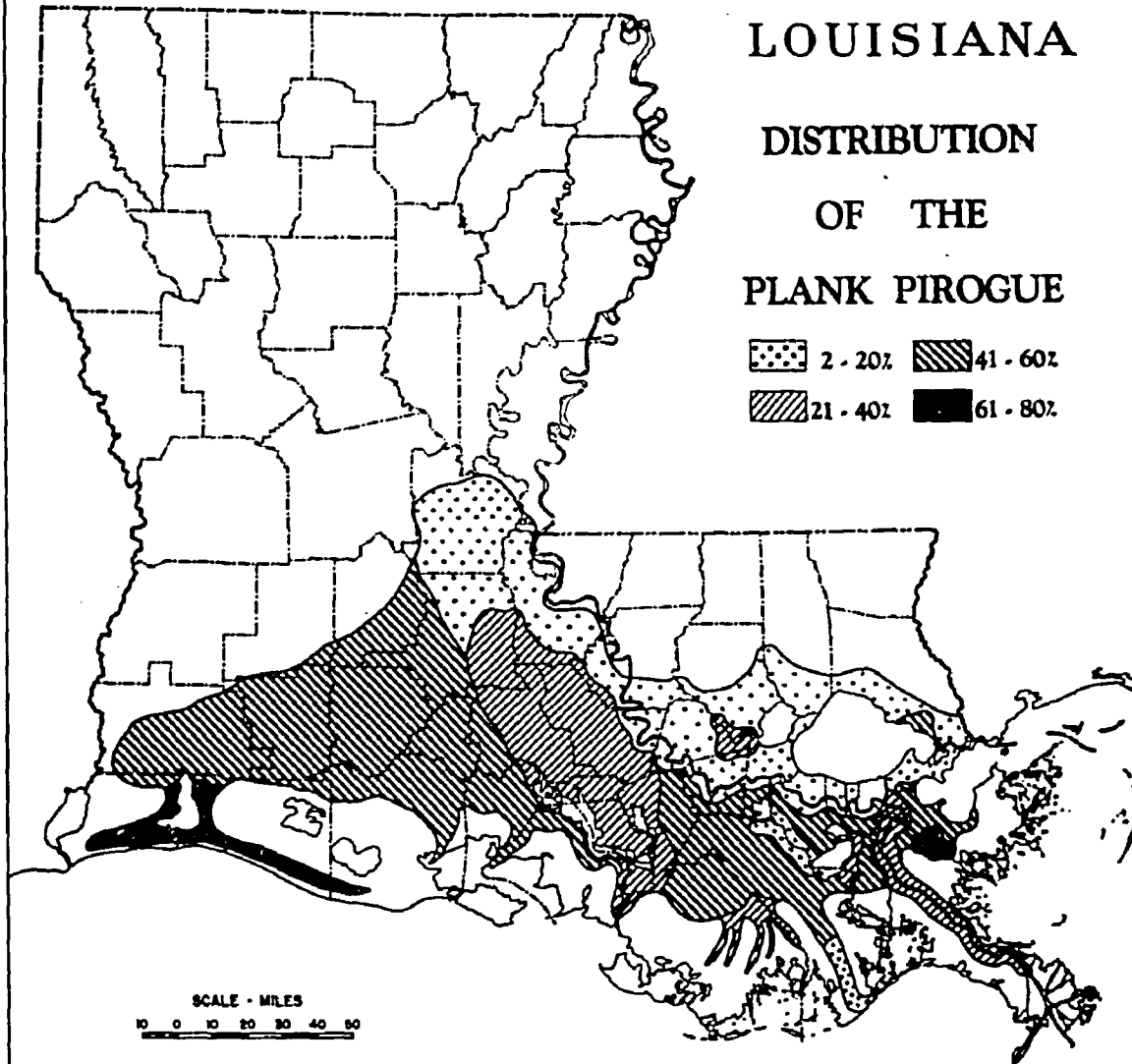
Plank Pirogues

The form and construction of plank pirogues vary a great deal locally. There are distinct subregional differences. The conformance to subregional patterns is so marked that in many cases it is possible to identify the source area of a plank boat by its appearance. The quality of construction varies in a like manner. In general, it is desirable to have as few planks as possible in the bottom, for the reason that the construction is sturdier, fewer braces are required, and there are fewer seams. The value of a plank pirogue may be judged in part by the number of planks in the bottom. In such cases they are designated either "two-plank pirogues," or "three-plank pirogues." This can also be an indication of beam. A single plank is always used for each side. These are formed around the bottom and are joined at the bow and stern, either by simply nailing them together or by nailing them to triangular stem and stern posts. There is actually no frame. Elbow braces are added on each side opposite one another, and may be connected by horizontal braces on the bottom. The smaller details of construction vary with the quality of the boat and the district where it is built. The seams of a well-built boat are covered with tar and sometimes battens. If a boat is painted, the color is green.

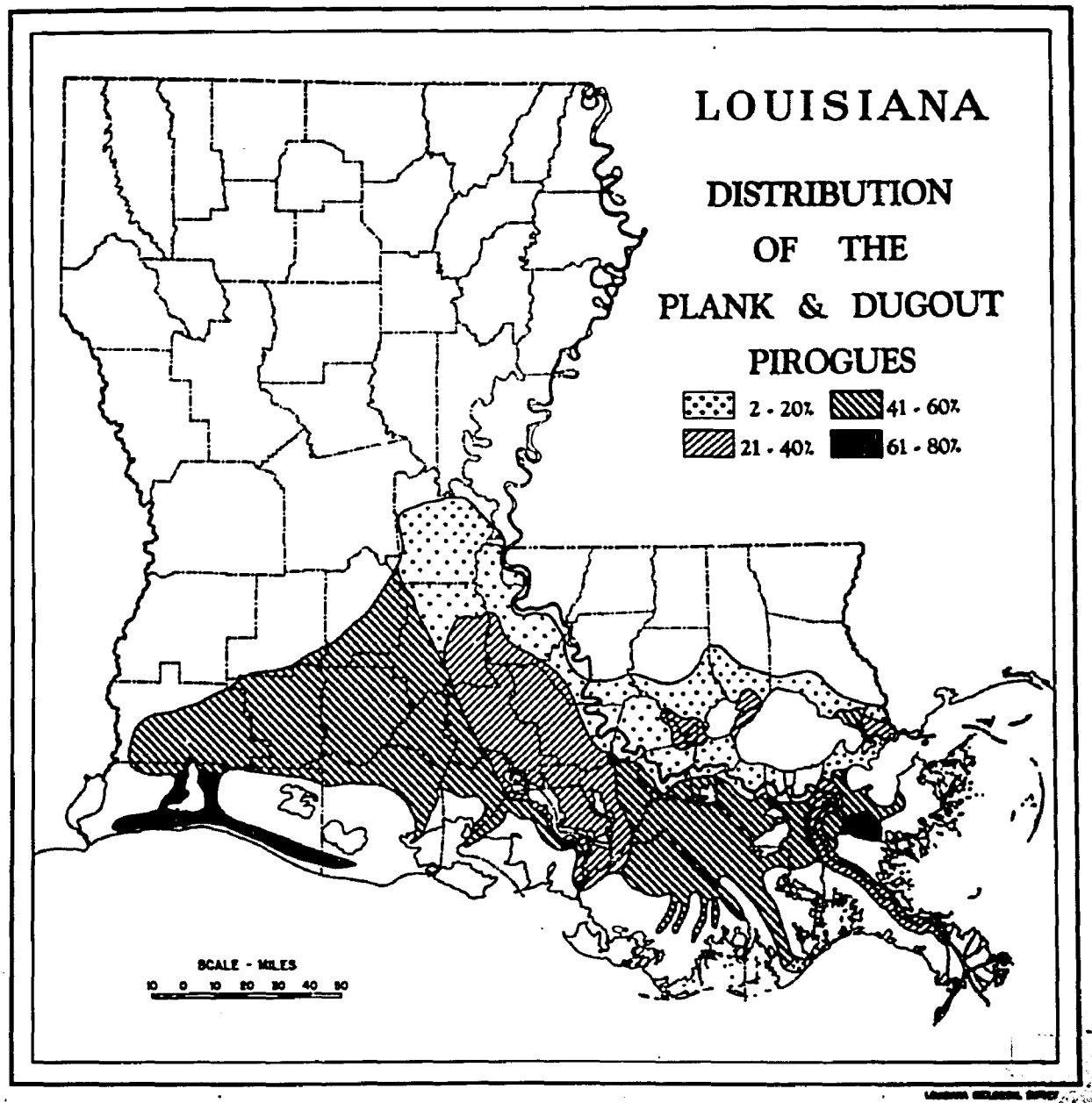
These boats serve many purposes and have generally filled the functions of the dugout. They are used for trapping, fishing, hunting, swamp work, and ferrying in all kinds of situations. The equipment and methods of use are the same as for the dugouts. The plank pirogue occurs in a much larger area than the dugout, but it is not uniformly important throughout. The distribution (Pl. 115) roughly corresponds to the region of French Louisiana, and approximately the area where the dugout was being used about 1910.

# LOUISIANA

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE PLANK PIROGUE



SCALE - MILES  
10 0 10 20 30 40 50



The plank boats of the southeastern bayou country resemble the modern dugout more than those of any other district. They are the best constructed and have smooth lines, flaring sides, and usually some sheer. Twelve feet is about the average length. Braces are few and small. Thwarts, molding, and paint are generally used in the southeast, but not elsewhere. The plank pirogues of the southwestern district north of the marshes are larger and less well formed. The sides may be slightly flaring or vertical, braces are large and angular, and sheer is slight or absent. Often bow and stern fillets are nailed to the top of the gunwhales. The largest boats are made in the marshes of southwest Louisiana. Fourteen feet is about the average length. In the typical boat the sides run straight at the waist for a few feet before curving toward the ends. Beams are wider and braces most numerous in these boats. In the Atchafalaya Basin plank pirogues are smallest and have the most sheer. Generally they have a coaming about two inches wide at the waist which diminishes to nothing toward the bow and stern. Often they are equipped with fish wells which are made by placing two boards spaced about two feet apart across the waist of the boat. Holes are bored in the bottom of the boat and closed with plugs.

Recently pirogues have been made of marine plywood. They are most common in the center of the dugout-pirogue country and are primarily used by trappers. The best examples are in the Delacroix Island area (Pl. 118). Plywood is superior in some ways. It weighs much less, is easily shaped, and still makes a sturdy construction with fewer pieces. A single piece is used for the bottom. A plywood boat is finished with the same details as a well-built southeastern plank pirogue, with the addition of a removable plankwalk to protect the bottom.





Pecan Island



Bayou St. Jean Charles

Cameron Pirogues

Southeast Pirogues



Basile



Simmesport

Southwest Pirogue

Atchafalaya Pirogue

Subregional Types of Plank Pirogues



Bayou Terre aux Boeufs

A Plywood Pirogue

### Chaland

Several kinds of small rectangular flat-bottomed boats occur almost everywhere throughout the state. The chaland is one type which is restricted to the lower bayou country. Its form and construction seem crude by comparison with other boats of the region, but it is usually well built of inexpensive planking and is never painted. The typical chaland is perfectly rectangular (Pl. 119). The non-flaring sides run straight to a square bow and stern, and the end boards are vertical. There is no sheer; instead the bottoms of the ends have an abrupt, angular, upward slant, which serves the purpose. There may be several seats, or none. The extreme ends are often covered with boards about one foot wide, which are nailed to the top of the gunwales. The chaland is from ten to fourteen feet long, two and a half to three feet wide, and from eight to twelve inches deep. A few are a little larger, and some have a small, triangular, external keel.

Other kinds of boats similar to the chaland might be collectively termed "paddle boats," although there are a number of local names. There is a considerable variation of form and quality of construction in this class which has no regional association. The most important differences between these boats and the chaland are that the paddle boats characteristically have flaring and curving sides and a certain amount of sheer. In the most common subtype, the width of the bow is less than that of the stern. Another which has bow and stern of the same width and a beam wider than the ends is called a "double ender" in some places. The dimensions of these boats are similar to those of the chaland. The paddle boat has a very wide distribution throughout the state (Pl. 120).



Bayou Lafourche

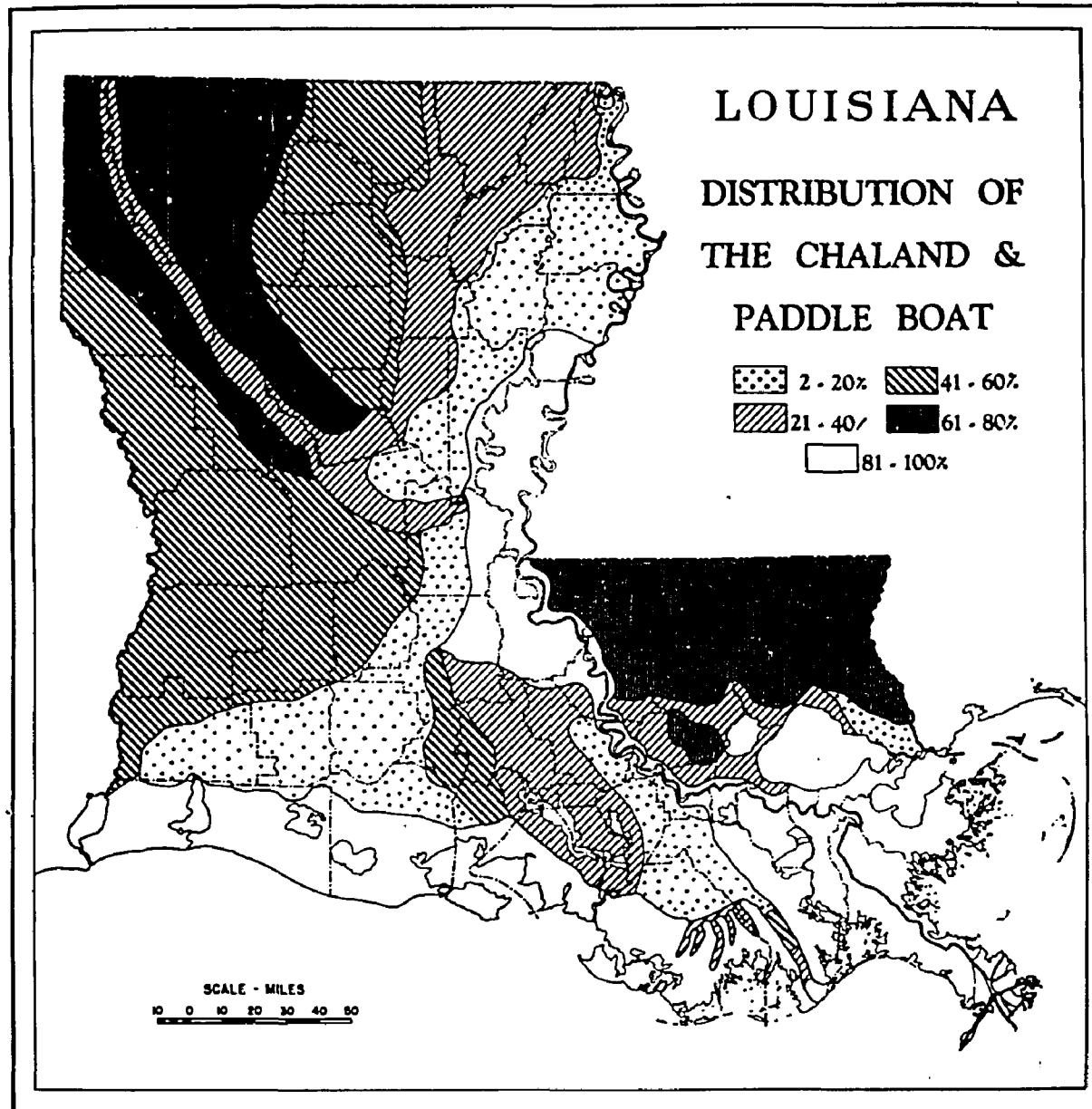


Bayou Pointe au Chien



Bayou Terre aux Boeufs

Chalands



"Paddle boat" is a north-Louisiana name, and among boatmen it is used with some consistency. Otherwise, the paddle boat in north Louisiana might be called a "skiff," which is a general name for any small boat. Some kinds of boats are made which closely resemble the chaland in that they are perfectly rectangular, but there is no relationship. Its construction is the measure of boat knowledge and need in the region.

Chaland has a broad meaning which includes rectangular, flat-bottomed boats of almost any size.<sup>17</sup> Although it might be used specifically to refer to the small boat previously described, it could also mean a camp boat. The term would not exclude the paddle boats, but those boats are rare where the typical chaland occurs. The area of the chaland is almost limited to Terrebonne, Lafourche, and Assumption parishes. The name is known throughout French Louisiana, but is used mainly in the lower bayou country. Thus, where the paddle boat occurs in French Louisiana it might be called chaland, or "flatboat" where it is beyond the flatboat area along the Mississippi. It may be significant that in the lower Atchafalaya area the chaland is sometimes called a "plank boat." Special kinds of "plank boats" were occasionally used for logging in the Atchafalaya swamps. They were perfectly rectangular and very narrow, about ten to twelve feet long and less than two feet wide. It is possible that the term "plank boat" was transferred from this boat to the plank pirogue.

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<sup>17</sup>This usage is Louisiana French. Cf. Reed, op. cit., p. 135. Standard French has chaland, a barge or scow, and chalan, a rectangular, flat-bottomed river boat. Cf. Jal, op. cit., p. 452. —

In the lower bayou country the typical chaland is used only for crossing a bayou, never for going even a short distance up or down the bayou. For that reason there is no need to distinguish between bow and stern. Stability, rather than speed, is the most important quality. The boat is always operated by hand. The characteristic method of use is paddling in a standing position. It is not worth sitting to go a short distance. Any kind of paddle may be used, but there is a special chaland paddle which has a shaft about four feet long without an end grip, and a blade roughly squared at the end. A special chaland, a little larger than the average, and sometimes propelled by oars, is used for moss gathering.

### Esquif

Of all the folk boats in French Louisiana, none is more carefully distinguished than the esquif or "skiff." The essential features of this boat type are a flat bottom, pointed bow, and blunt stern. These characteristics do not identify the boat, for they are quite general. A "rowboat," for example, is similar in these respects, but it is not the same thing. The distinguishing features are intangible. The differences are a matter of degree rather than kind. The type is valid for it is recognized as such throughout the bayou country by those who are aware of boat lore.

The Louisiana French esquif is the same as the standard French.<sup>18</sup> In standard French the word is equivalent to the English "skiff." Both terms have a very broad meaning and are used to designate any small open boat, with the exception of any kind of canoe. In Louisiana the English

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<sup>18</sup> Reed, op. cit., p. 135.

"skiff" is used in the same sense, except in the lower bayou country and along the Mississippi, where it refers to a specific type. The French esquif has come to have a restricted meaning, and in the region where the boat is used, esquif and "skiff" are synonymous and are not used in the general sense. Elsewhere, a skiff might be called such with no particular meaning intended. In north Louisiana the rowboat is also a skiff, and in French Louisiana "rowboat" is not used.

The general design of the skiff is ancient, and boats of that form are common on the inland waters in many parts of the world.<sup>19</sup> There are many examples in America with European antecedents. The form is very susceptible to change; the slightest difference in the lines of the boat may cause it to be given a more-specific name. Boats resembling the modern skiff could have been present in the Louisiana colony from the earliest times, though not be recognized specifically as such. In the coastal waters, and on the Mississippi and large streams, there were several kinds of small vessels resembling the skiff, which were propelled by sail and oar. Some of these were the peniche, chaloupe, and galere.<sup>20</sup> The name and type appeared early in the Mississippi Valley. Some of the large flat-bottomed boats which were used on the river in the latter part of the 18th century were called skiffs if the bow, or bow and stern, were pointed. Later they were called barges. Small skiffs were generally

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<sup>19</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th. ed. (1932), Vol. III, pp. 761-764.

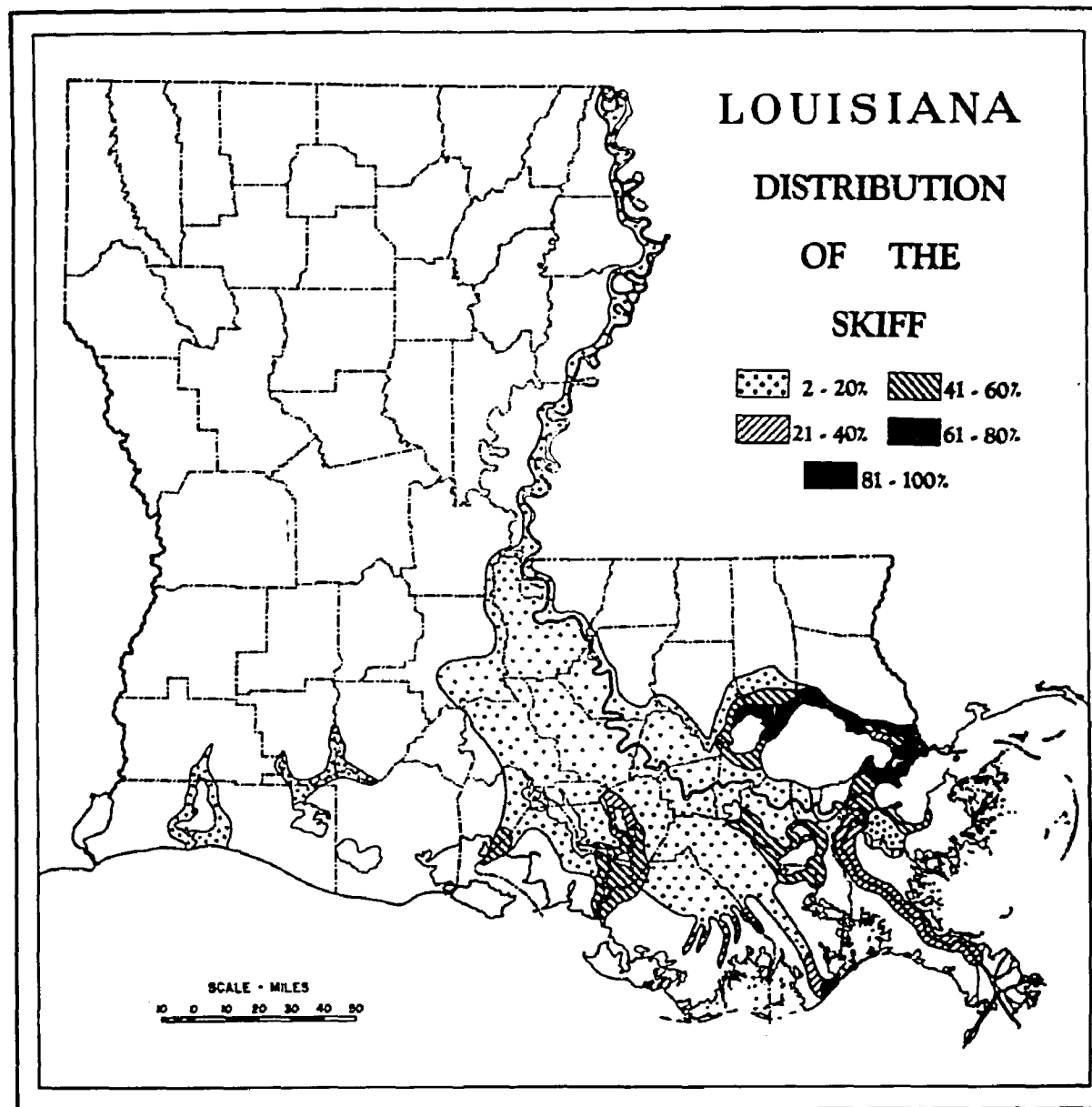
<sup>20</sup> Roland, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 248.  
 Dumont, Mem. Hist. sur La Louisiane, Vol. 2, pp. 146-149.  
 Fortier, Louisiana, Vol. 1, p. 351.  
 Sibley, J., "The Journal of Dr. John Sibley, July-October, 1802," La. Hist. Quart., X (1927) 474-497.  
 Faye, S., "Types of Privateer Vessels, Their Armament and Flags, in the Gulf of Mexico," La. Hist. Quart., XXIII (1940) 118-130.



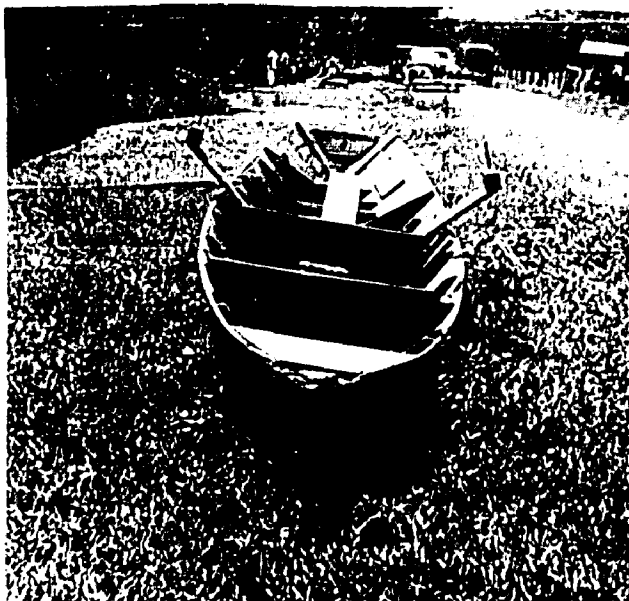
carried on the big flat-bottomed boats of all kinds. In lower Louisiana, the function of the skiff during the pioneer period were largely filled by the dugout, i.e., travel for a considerable distance with or without a small cargo. As the pirogue declined, the skiff became more important. Many bayou dwellers remember having to travel for several days by skiff to get ordinary household supplies. Now that transportation need no longer exists.

The skiff in Louisiana today is used along the Mississippi, in large coastal and interior lakes and bays, and in the bayous which lead to such water bodies (Pl. 121). The main concentrations are around Lakes Pontchartrain, Maurepas, and Borgne, and Lakes Salvador and Des Allemands, the lower Atchafalaya Basin, and the Mississippi below New Orleans. In those areas it is used constantly. Elsewhere, it is used only occasionally. Where it is important it is used primarily for some fishing activity and, because it is handy, it may also be used for ferrying. One specialized use is required in commercial crab fishing. On the Mississippi below New Orleans, it is used to tend fish lines and traps. Above New Orleans those tasks are generally performed in a flatboat. Large numbers of skiffs are kept for hire on those bayous frequented by sportsmen.

Three kinds of skiffs can be distinguished. The differences are not always clear, and ordinarily not enough to justify a special name. However, any boatman in the region will point out the merits of the different kinds, though not referring to them by a particular name. Some typical examples are given in Plates 122 and 123. The largest of these varieties might be termed the "lake skiff." It is best suited to open water and is dominant on the big coastal lakes and bays. Thick



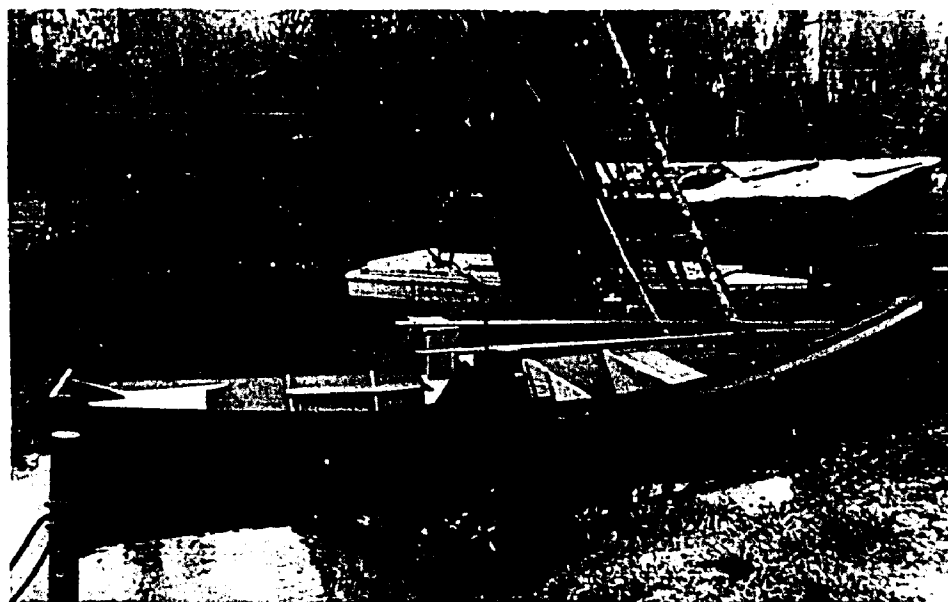
LOUISIANA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Grand Bayou



Bayou St. Jean Charles

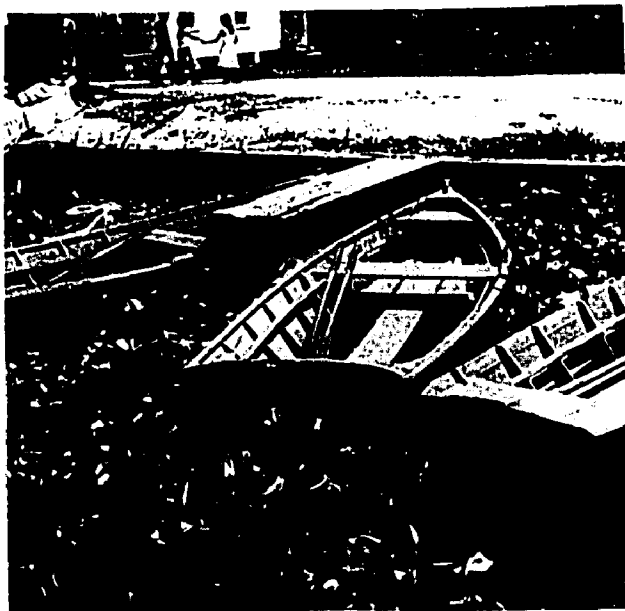


Atakapas Landing

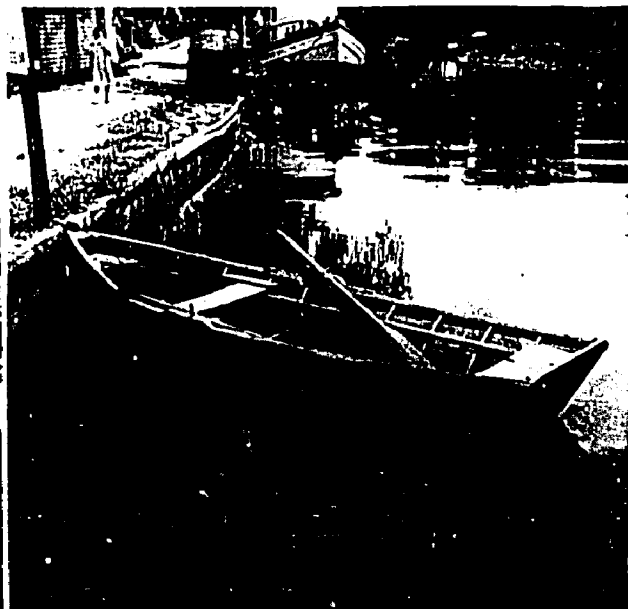
Creole Skiffs



Bayou Bonfuca



Bayou Gauche



Bayou Gauche

Lake Skiffs

and heavy planks are used in its construction. The length is about fourteen feet, but is not constant. The beam is the greatest in proportion to length of all the skiffs, and the stern is wide and rectangular.

Intermediate between the lake skiff and the smallest is the "Mississippi skiff." It is generally no shorter than the lake skiff, but has a smaller beam in proportion to the length. The stern board is less rectangular and more V-shaped. The lake skiff has a broad, bulging appearance, and the Mississippi skiff is slender.

The smallest and lightest is actually called the "Creole skiff" wherever it is in a minority to the other types. The name occurs from Bayou Bonfuca, near Slidell, to Bayou Boeuf, near Morgan City. The Creole skiff characteristically occurs on small, interior water bodies, and attains its most typical development in the Atchafalaya Basin, where it is specifically esquif. The distinguishing features are a narrow beam, considerable sheer, and a high, slightly overhanging V-shaped stern.

The canotte is a special kind of large skiff (Pl. 124). The length is usually over fifteen feet, but size alone is not the determining quality. It always has an inboard engine. It may be open, or partially decked fore and aft, or fitted with a cabin and decked around. Small open skiffs with an inboard engine are usually called "gas boats," but if decked, canotte. The difference between a large canotte and a small lugger is not always clear.

The skiff is always rowed, if a motor is not used. Even if the boat has a motor, it is generally equipped with oars. Most of the boatmen make their own equipment, oars and oarlocks. Occasionally, manufactured oars and modern metal swivel oarlocks are used. The ordinary



Bayou Boeuf Near Kraemer



Bayou Pointe au Chien

Canottes

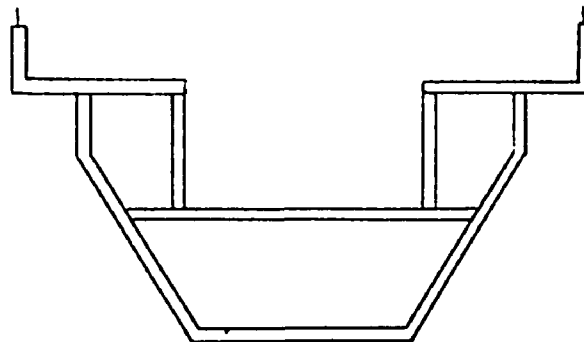
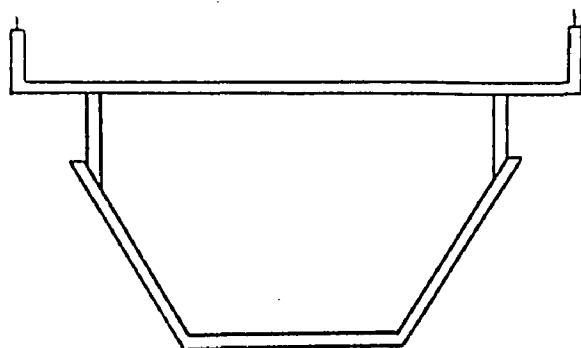
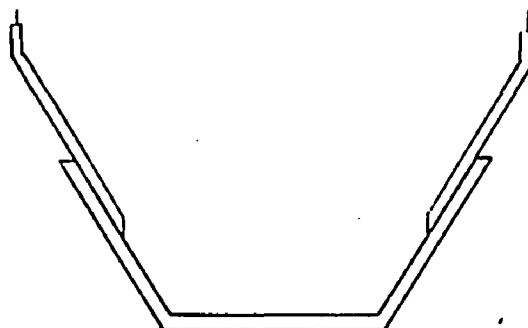
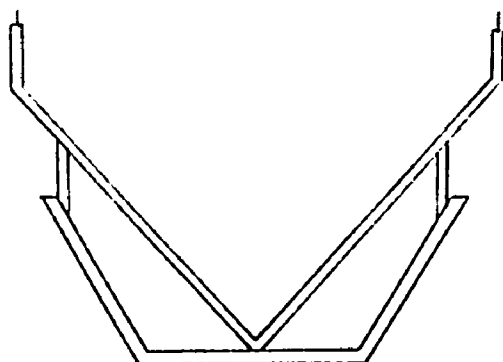
handmade oars resemble the manufactured oars. Special oars, which are very thick near the handle end, are made for the "standing skiff." The standard oarlock is the tholepin and strap (tolet and estroke).

The "standing skiff" is one which is operated in a standing position. It could be any type, but is most commonly the Creole skiff. In the standing method of rowing, the oarsman faces the bow and imparts a thrust to the boat by pushing on the oars. This is an old Mediterranean European method; immigrant Dalmatians and Italians remember having used the method in the homeland. In the Lake Pontchartrain area, it is known as the "Dago" method. Elsewhere in the United States, it is used by the Greek fishermen around Tarpon Springs, Florida.

Although ordinary oarlocks can be used with the standing method, the operation is awkward and tiresome, and a special device is needed. In Louisiana this rowing device is called a joug.<sup>21</sup> The function of the joug is to elevate the oars and extend the fulcrum beyond the sides of the boat. Several types are used (Pl. 125). All types have the oars secured by means of a tholepin and strap. The simplest joug consists of a pair of separate and removable pieces. Each piece is a small board about two inches wide and two feet long with a block of wood on one end

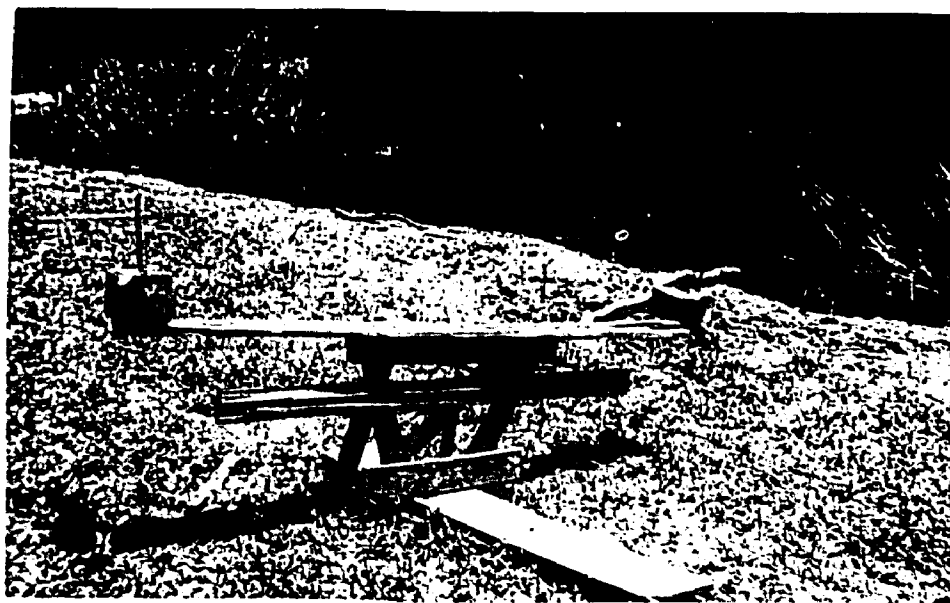
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<sup>21</sup> Other pronunciations are jouc and joup. In both Louisiana and standard French the word means "yoke," and can be used in other ways. In nautical terminology the joug (Eng., yoke, Ital., giogo) secured the oars of a galley. Jal, op. cit., pp. 866, 748. The European device is called "fork" (Fr., fourche, Ital., forca). It is different in that it does not cross the waist of the boat. There is a single piece for each oar, i.e., the oars are not yoked together. The rowlock itself is a hook, rather than a tholepin and strap. A special example is the forcola of the Venetian gondola. It is a single piece and the gondolier uses the oar with both hands. Jal, op. cit., pp. 710-711. A small boat, resembling the plank pirogue of Louisiana, is used on the Po River. It is equipped with a "fork" on each gunwale. It would seem that the particular details of the joug were worked out in Louisiana, but the European connections are clear.



DIAGRAMS OF TYPES OF JOUGS





Jougs

to hold the tholepin. These are inserted in a slot on the inside of the gunwales. Other types are a single piece fixed for holding both oars. They may be removable or permanently attached to the boat.

At present, the joug is used only in two locations, on the lower Mississippi around Venice, and in the lower Atchafalaya Basin, from Lake Verret southward. It, or the standing skiff, is remembered throughout the bayou country from Bayou Teche to Bayou Bonfuca. About 1900, it was commonly used throughout French Louisiana. It is distinctly associated with the skiff, but is occasionally used on other types of boats. In the Lake Verret area, chalands which are used for moss gathering are sometimes equipped with jougs. There are a few plank pirogues in Terrebonne Parish with jougs, but these are oddities. The big pre-modern dugouts commonly had jougs; some had two and three pairs. The very largest used a man on each oar. It is possible that the joug was first used on skiffs, but were transferred to the pirogue in the early days because the pirogue was the common boat.

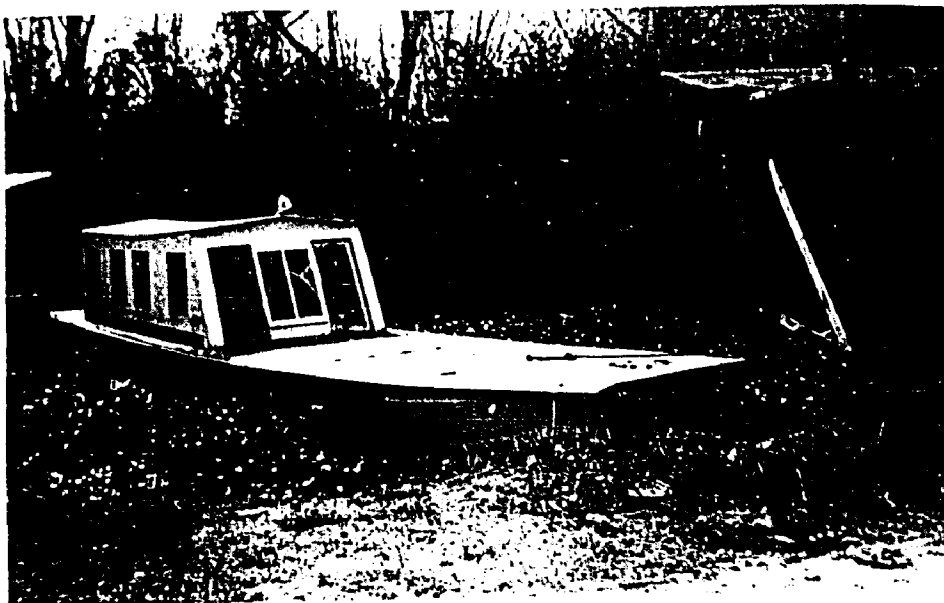
Small water-cooled motors have taken the place of the joug almost everywhere, and it is surprising that it is still used at all. Generally, if a skiff has a motor, it is called a "gas boat." These are steered with a rudder which is connected by means of a line and pulleys to a vertical control stick in the center of the boat. They are used for long trips, especially those connected with fishing, and are necessary in crab fishing. The crab fisherman controls the boat with one hand and with the other scoops the crabs off his line with a net in passing.

### Bateau

Bateau as now used in Louisiana has a very restricted meaning which applies to only one kind of boat (Pl. 127). The bateau is a large



Attakapas Landing



Attakapas Landing

Bateaux

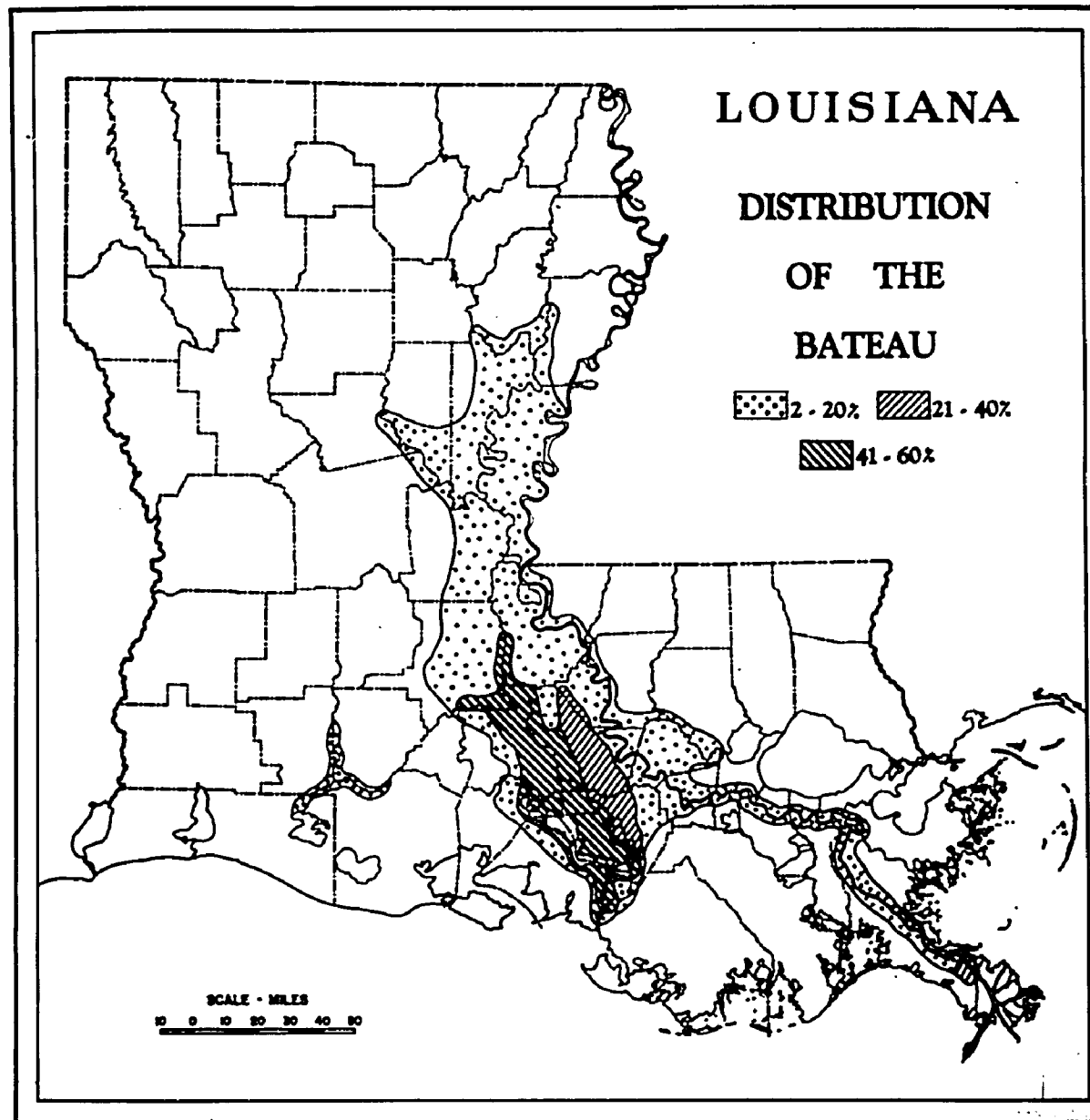
flat-bottomed boat with a blunt bow and stern. The length is usually over fifteen feet, and the width is between four and five feet. A large amount of forward sheer is typical; the bow rises out of the water. The bow is more narrow than the stern and the run forward longer than the run aft. It is partially decked fore and aft and sometimes on the sides, which leaves an open well in the waist. The well is surrounded by a coaming of several inches. Most bateaux are so large that they must have an inboard motor. The largest have cabins over the well, but still belong to the type. On the other end of the scale they become indistinguishable from flatboats. If they have an inboard motor or a small amount of decking, they are bateaux, even though they might be smaller than some flatboats. A motor is not essential; a few of the smaller ones are equipped with jougs.

The term bateau is old in the Mississippi Valley and was adopted into English during the period of the big flatboats. Beginning about 1790, the great pirogues were replaced as the main cargo vessels by several kinds of large, keelless, flat-bottomed boats. Many names were used for these boats, some of which were not specific. Bateau was used by English, as well as French-speaking, boatmen for a flatboat which had a pointed bow and stern. From almost the beginning of settlement, the French in Louisiana built a similar boat which they called bateau plat.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that bateau was an abbreviation of the full French word, and so acquired its specific meaning. Once the term was

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<sup>22</sup>Chambers, Henry B., "Early Commercial Prestige of New Orleans," La. Hist. Quart., V (1922), 451-461.

Pfaff, Caroline S., "Henry Miller Shreve in Biography," La. Hist. Quart., X (1927), 192-240.



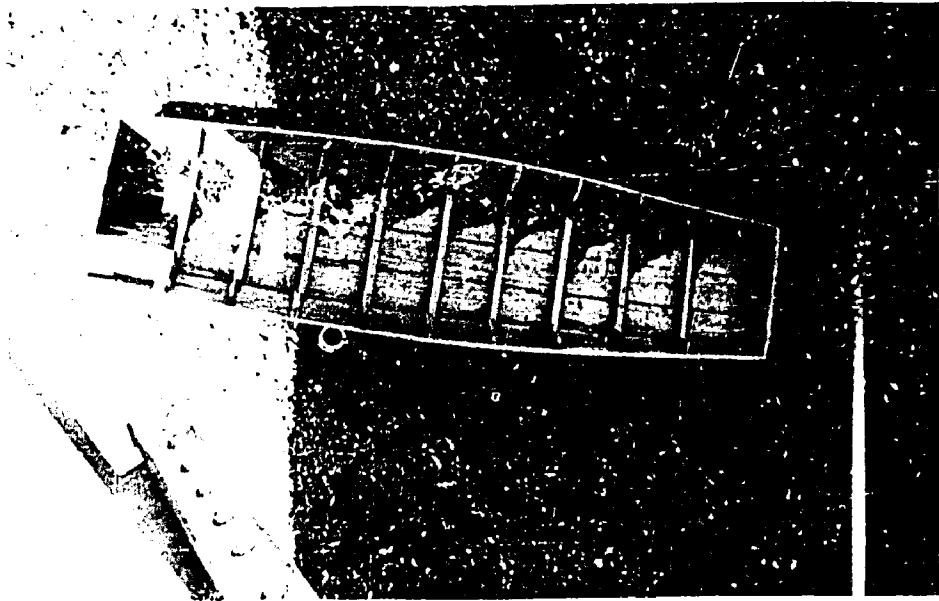
adopted into English, it became established throughout the valley. The modern bateau is very likely not any kind of descendant of the old boats, but seems to be a development from the modern flatboat.

The only place where the bateau is important today is the Atchafalaya Basin (Pl. 128). There it takes the place of the canotte, a boat for long-distance travel and fishing on the large lakes. It was used in cypress lumbering, and that may account for it becoming the motor-powered boat of the locality, which elsewhere in French Louisiana is the skiff. A few on the lower Nepique and Queue de Tortue are used in small-scale logging activities. It was once used on the large streams in the northeastern quarter of the state to pull ferry barges, where it was called a "joe-boat," or sometimes, "john-boat."

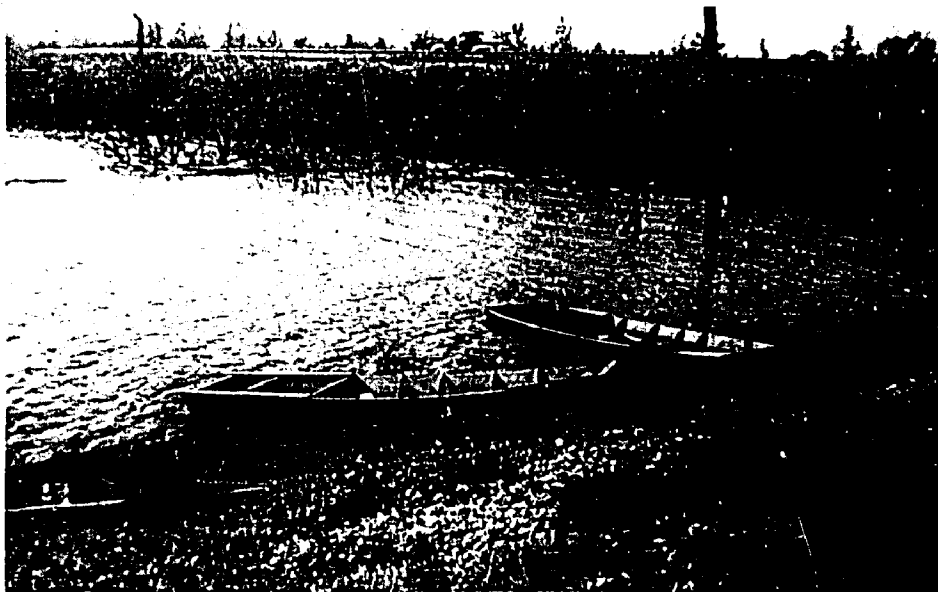
#### The Flatboat.

All of the inland boats of Louisiana have flat bottoms, but only one kind is called a "flatboat" (Pl. 129). More commonly it is simply called a "flat." Both ends of the boat are blunt, and the stern is always wider than the bow. The maximum beam is always a little aft of the waist, and the typical flat has enough forward sheer so that the bow rises above the water. The average boat is between twelve and fourteen feet long, and has a beam of about three feet. A good flat must have flaring sides. Horizontal and elbow braces are used on the inside. A fish well is standard. The boatman's seat is in the extreme stern, for generally the boat is driven with an outboard motor. If not, oars are used.

Boats bearing the name bateau plat were used from the very earliest days of the French settlement in Louisiana. In 1720, colonists were



Grand Ecore



Simmesport

Flatboats

transported on flatboats from Biloxi to New Orleans.<sup>23</sup> These were large boats and may have had a pointed bow and stern, for the rectangular boat was called a radeau.<sup>24</sup> Although flatboats are best known for their importance on the Mississippi, they were also used on the smaller streams and bayous.<sup>25</sup> These were very likely smaller versions of the Mississippi flats. The present flat probably did not exist as long as the dugout and skiff were important.

The distribution of the flatboat shows it to be distinctly a Mississippi River boat (Pl. 130). It is important only on the large streams, and is of little consequence on the large lakes. In scattered localities outside of French Louisiana it is sometimes called bateau, where that boat has not been used for three or four decades.

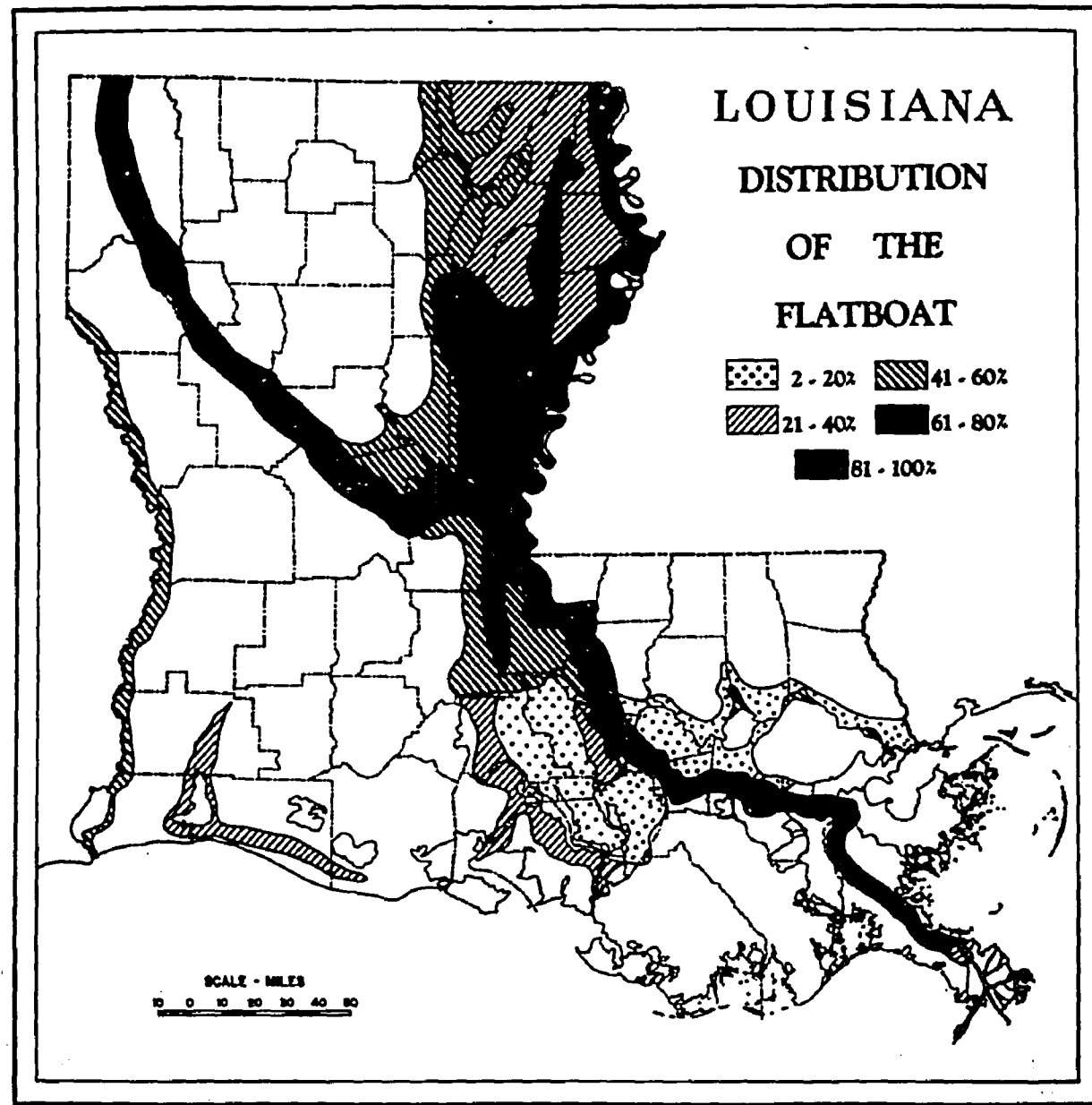
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<sup>23</sup>Dawson, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>24</sup>Jal, op. cit., p. 1252.  
Pfaff, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>25</sup>Prichard, "Cathcart," pp. 826, 835, 842. In 1819, Cathcart mentioned them for Bayou Teche and Bayou Plaquemine. These boats must have been smaller than those on the Mississippi, for, according to Cathcart, the Teche was wide enough for only "flats" and "canoes."





## Chapter VIII

### Summary: The Landscape Succession

As there were evolutionary changes in the forms comprising the different landscapes, there were also different stages in the evolution of those landscapes. Accordingly, landscape periods may be recognized as times during which the major evolutionary stages prevailed. These periods are necessarily arbitrary, for changes have not occurred everywhere at the same rate, and the changes in one form for one landscape may not correspond to changes of a similar nature in another landscape. The sequential development of these stages constitutes the landscape succession. There are four periods in the succession: (1) the Frontier Period (c. 1714 to 1730), (2) the Pioneer Period (c. 1730 to 1860), (3) the Recent Period (c. 1860 to 1910), and (4) the Modern Period (c. 1910 to the present).

The Frontier Period (1714-1730) was that period during which the land was first occupied by the European colonists; the time during which old world introductions and new world adaptations were made. The colony was mainly dependent upon the homeland for maintenance and had not yet developed an economy which was adjusted to the local resources. The influence of the Indian culture was greater than at any later time.

Palisade forts were the dominant settlement features. There was little more than dwellings of stakes in the ground or collombage construction and palmetto houses, surrounded by stake fences. There was no differentiation of the frontier landscape into subtypes. The principal landscape survivals of this period are: the dugout pirogue, the fence of riven pickets in the ground, the saddle-roof barn and shed of

riven boards, the palmetto shed, and the cart or charette.

The Pioneer Period (1730-1860) began when the land was first occupied by sedentary peoples bent on making permanent homes. This stage did not reach every part of the region at the same time, but followed the expanding frontier. During this time the first complete pattern was developed which included all of those structures which were necessary for a life and economy adjusted to the resources of the region and largely independent of outside assistance. The three types of landscapes differentiated at the beginning of this period.

The most representative feature of the period was the half-timbered Creole house. It was the dwelling of the early planter as well as the small farmer. Outbuildings were most numerous during the latter part of the period because there were more activities to be performed. Plantations and farms were more self-sufficient and independent of outside goods than at any other time. Outbuildings were frame structures covered with palmetto, bark, or pieux. Fences of horizontal pieux surrounded cultivated fields and the front pasture. Fences of standing pickets were used around the house. The characteristic features of enclosure for a farmstead were the double front yard, fenced crops, and lanes which connected the open range or pasture at the front and back of the farmstead. The cart was the principal land vehicle. Water still offered the best advantages for both rapid travel and the transportation of freight. There were flatboats and small open sailing vessels like the chaloupe on the larger rivers, lakes, and bays, but the average pioneer depended upon the dugout pirogue which was used with oar, paddle, and sail.

The change from the Frontier to the Pioneer Period was not so marked for the landscape of the non-agricultural peoples, the hunters, fishermen, and all those who lived on the pioneer fringe. The palmetto house had probably become standardized early in the period. If fences were used, they were constructed of tall, riven pickets or stakes. The typical enclosure was a single yard around the dwelling. There was little need for sheds, but those that were needed were constructed of a pole framework covered with palmetto fronds.

Three or four decades before the close of the period the plantation system broke from the simplicity of the old Creole regime. Tremendous commercial success and a great influx of people and ideas from the Anglo-American South imposed a pattern on the plantation landscape which further set it apart from that of the Creole habitant. Pillared mansions held a dominant position in the landscape. The Creole planter continued to build houses on the old style but on a larger and more-opulent scale.

The outstanding landscape survivals of the period, excluding those belonging to the earlier period, are: the half-timbered and all-wooden Creole houses, the camp and shotgun houses, all barns excepting the saddle-roof barn, the double front yard, the skiff, and the flatboat.

The Recent Period (1860-1910) began with innovations on the principal structure of the Pioneer Period. By that time man had freed himself of or abandoned most of the restrictions and customs which the pioneer economy required of him. The critical event which initiated the period was the abandonment of half-timbering. The region still bore the dominant impress of the regional culture; introduced landscape forms were not significant throughout the period.

In the farm landscape no outstanding changes were made in the form of the dwellings; plan and exterior covering remained about the same. During the early part of the period the detached kitchen was incorporated with the house. Production was still primarily on the subsistence level. Kinds and numbers of outbuildings did not change greatly. There was a relative reduction in the number of grist mills, blacksmith shops, and syrup houses, as those services rose to the commercial level. Barns and outbuildings became larger because of the increased availability of milled lumber and the increased production of individual farms. Systems of enclosure became a little more elaborate, but still held to the old pattern. The barbed-wire fence, which appeared during the 1860's, greatly reduced the labor of building fences. It replaced field fences, but the fence of horizontal pieux was still used to enclose the yards near the house, especially the front pasture.

The most significant change in the trapper-fisher-swamper landscape was the sharp increase in the use of milled lumber. At the beginning of the main lumbering period (c. 1880), inexpensive lumber was available in large quantities for the first time. This made possible the conversion from palmetto to shotgun houses, though the former were not abandoned. They were built especially by those on either the economic fringe or the fringe of settlement. The beginning of the period saw the rapid rise of the board-and-batten shotgun house. The palmetto thatch roof was retained as the characteristic cover throughout the period. Barbed-wire fences replaced the wooden fences more rapidly than in the farm landscape. Systems of enclosure remained about the same. There were no other important changes. Except for the palmetto thatch roof, there are many examples of this landscape extant. The same is true for the farm landscape.

The Modern Period (1910 to present) is marked by a general invasion of foreign traits which have drastically altered the regional pattern. The index trait is the Southern bungalow. It has invaded all landscapes and is rapidly replacing the Creole house. More-modern houses, such as the "ranch house" and many kinds of cottages, are present in conspicuous numbers. These are indicators of the most-modern attitudes, and they stand in sharp contrast with their neighbors along many a bayou settlement. The modern economy has greatly increased the number of rural non-farm dwellings, which, because of the lack of outbuildings as well as house style and other factors, are a distinctive addition to the farming sections. Paint is more readily used, and Creole houses which have been without paint for decades are painted under the modern influences.

The house of the modern farm landscape is the bungalow. This house often replaces a Creole house in a farm assemblage which belongs to the earlier period. The house, being susceptible to the dominant attitudes, which in this case is modernity, changes more readily. The modern farm assemblage is considerably simplified over the Recent Period assemblage. Outbuildings are fewer and smaller, for mechanization has reduced the number of activities. Enclosure systems have been simplified accordingly.

Changes in individual traits were not so drastic for the trapper--fisher-swamper landscape as for the farm landscape. The house types are direct descendents of the original frontier dwellings, and they are spreading as modern houses. There were few changes in the organization of the occupance units, for there was little to change. The most significant addition is the car garage. A buggy shed was never a characteristic

landscape form, but now the automobile is necessary. In the case of the farm assemblage, the garage merely replaced the buggy shed. The greatest change brought about by mechanization, which took hold about the beginning of the period, was the shift in the site of settlement and the concentration of settlement units. More-rapid water transportation, made possible by the "gas boat," permitted the collection of dwellings adjacent to roads along the lower bayou settlements.

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## Vita

William Bernard Knipmeyer. Born Jan. 15, 1925, New Orleans, La.  
Son of William W. and Adele Knipmeyer. Reared in Natchitoches, La.  
Graduated from St. Mary's High School, Natchitoches, La., 1942.  
Attended La. State Univ., 1942-43. Served in U. S. Navy from June 15,  
1943 to Jan. 3, 1946. Attended La. State Univ. from Jan., 1946 to  
June, 1951. B. S. (Chemistry), 1947, M. S. (Geography), 1950. Research  
Assistant and Extension Instructor in Dept. of Geog. and Anth., La. State  
Univ., 1951-52. Instructor in Dept. of Geog. and Geol., Bradley Univ.,  
Peoria, Ill., 1952-54. Employed by Western Geophysical Co. of America,  
1954-55, and Columbia-Southern Chemical Corp., 1955-56.

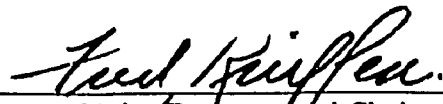
## EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

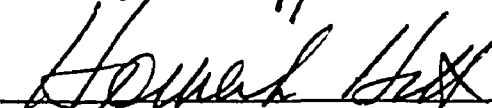
Candidate: William B. Knipmeyer

Major Field: Geography

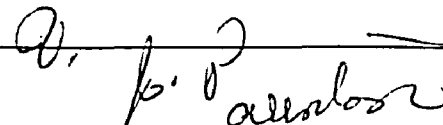
Title of Thesis: Settlement Succession in Eastern French Louisiana

Approved:

  
Major Professor and Chairman

  
Dean of the Graduate School

### EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

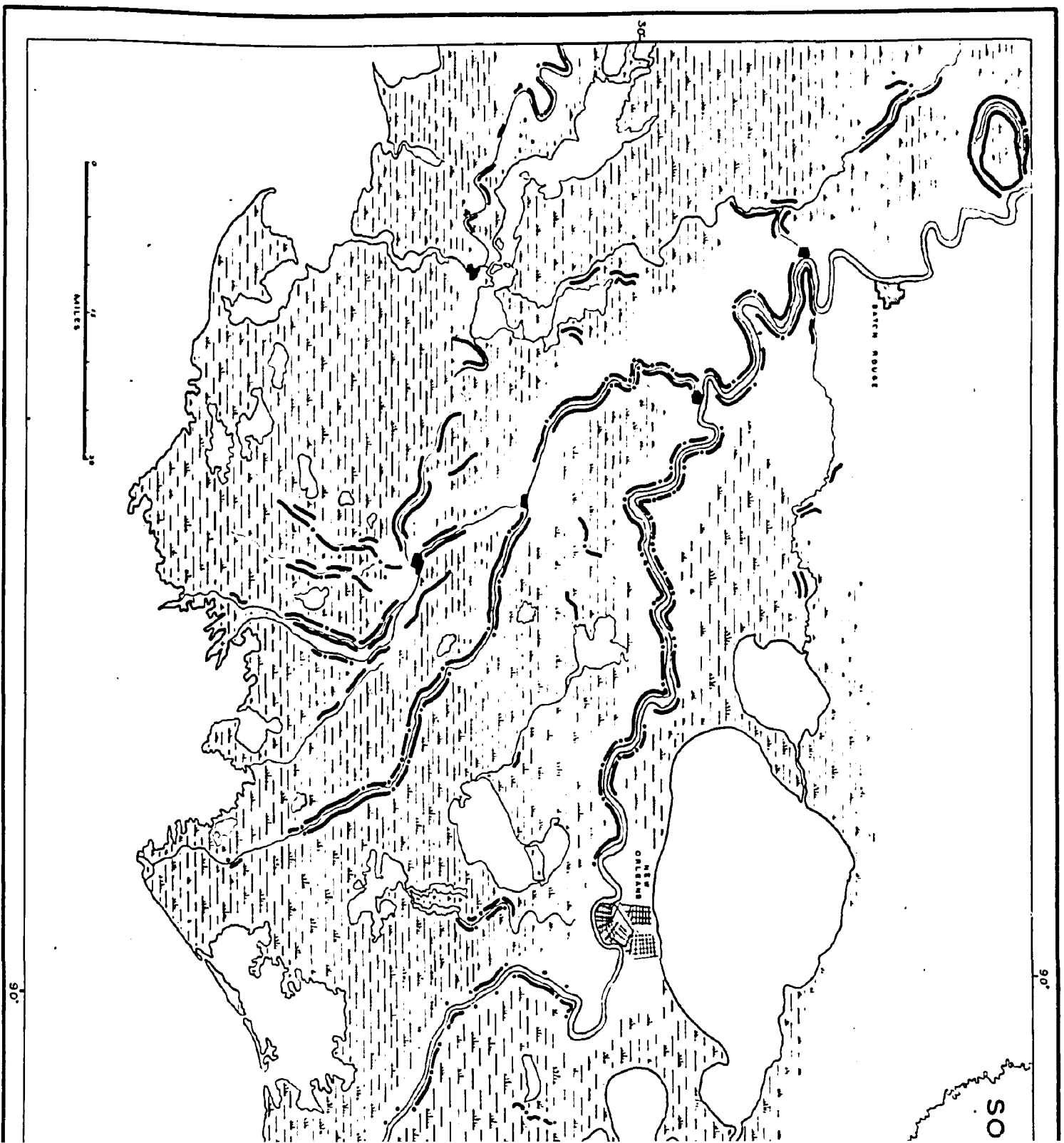
  
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William G. Haag  
Alan Cheatham

Wm. G. McIntire  
James P. Moya

Date of Examination:

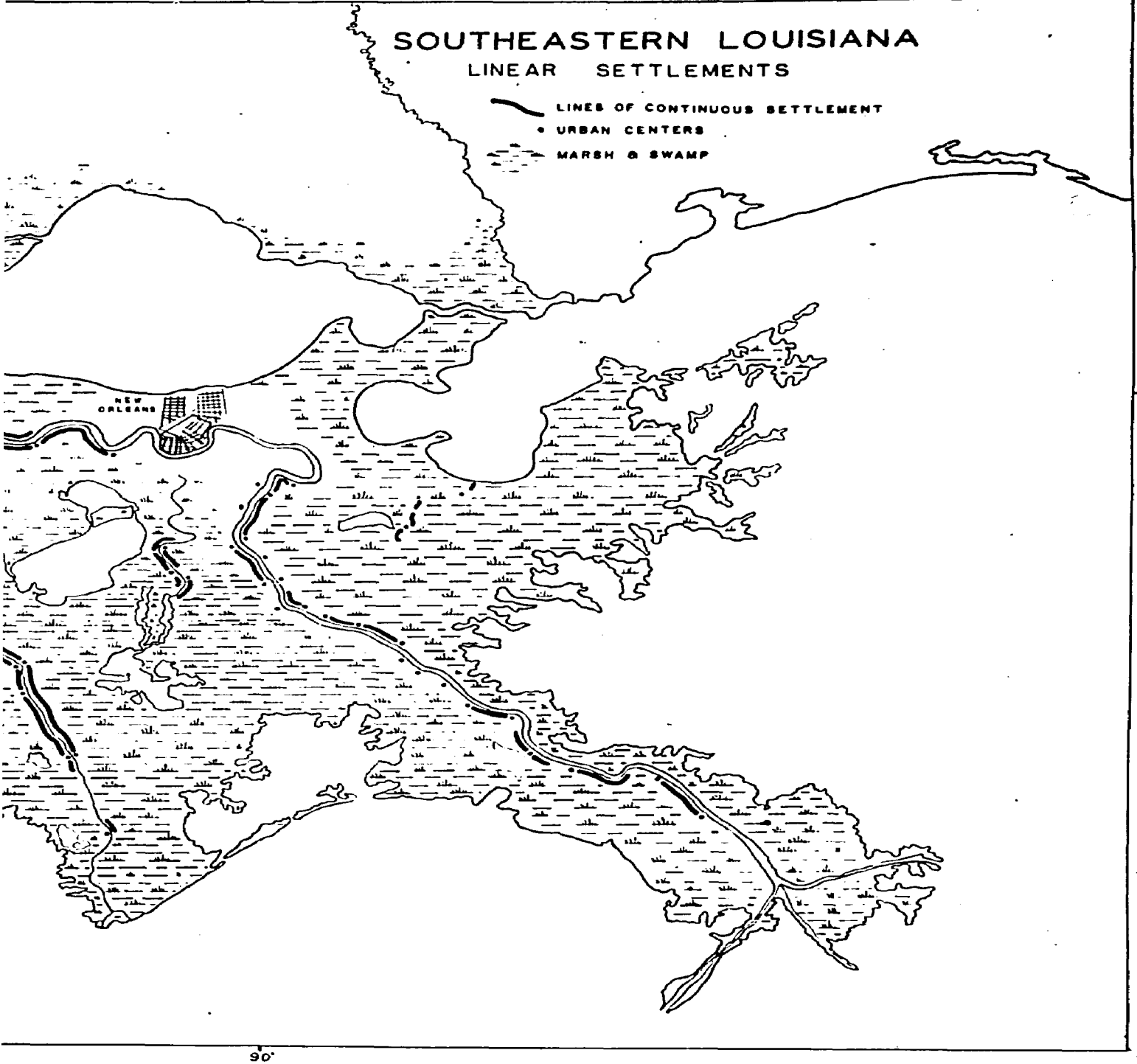
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# SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA LINEAR SETTLEMENTS

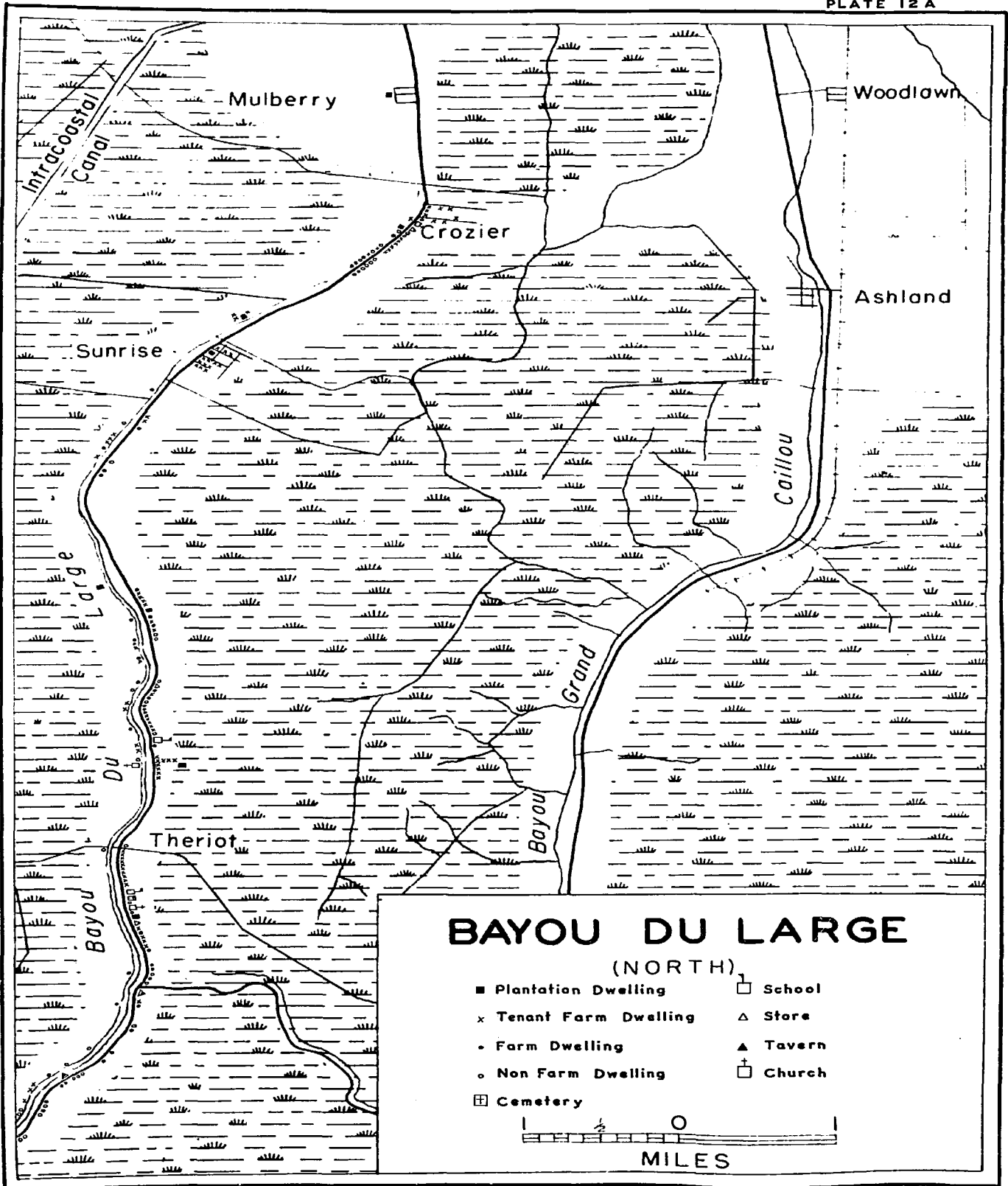
- LINES OF CONTINUOUS SETTLEMENT
- URBAN CENTERS
- ▨ MARSH & SWAMP

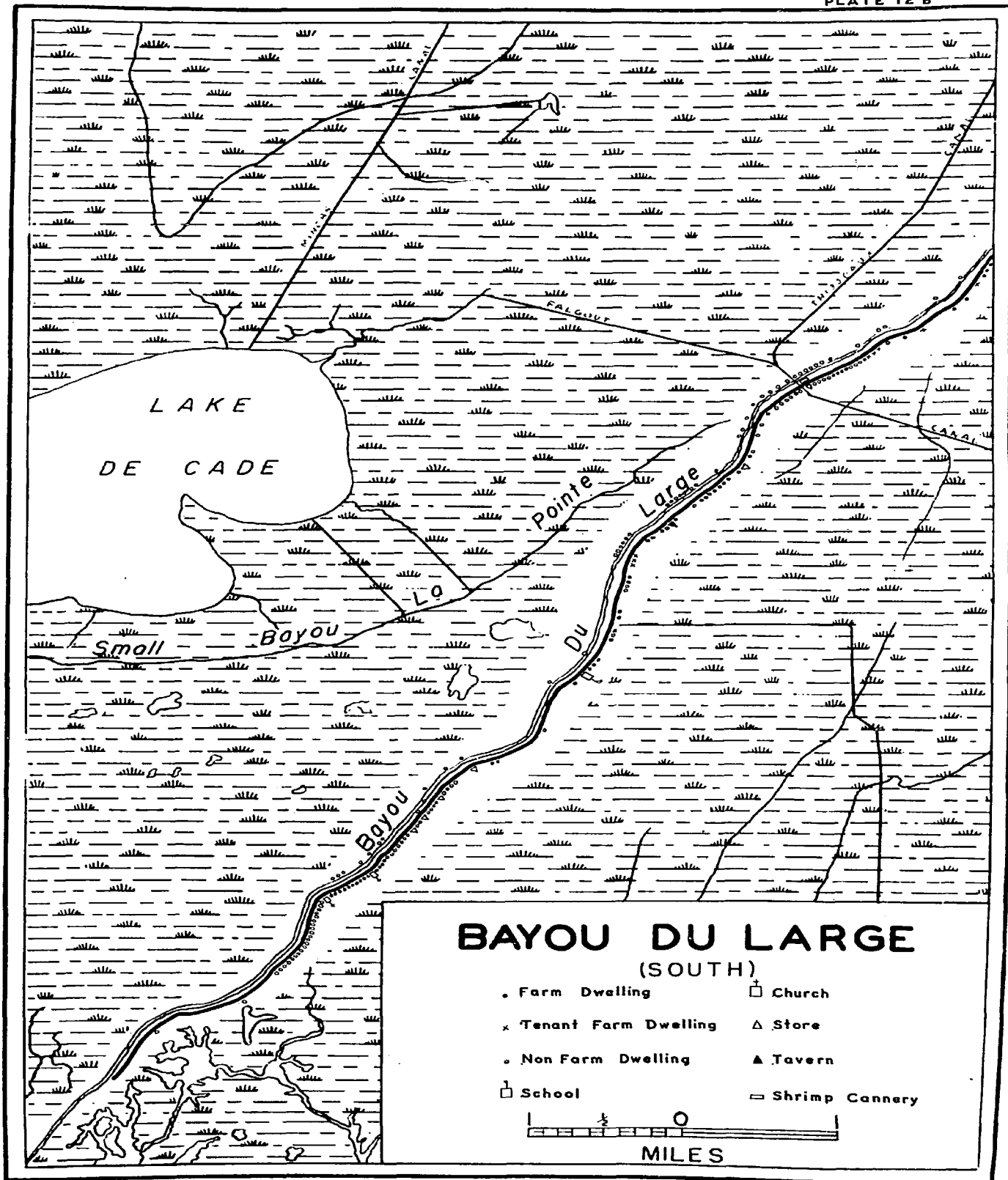


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# BAYOU POINTE AU CHIEN

- Farm Dwelling
- Non Farm Dwelling
- School
- Church
- △ Store
- ▲ Tavern

